

EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE FOR SERVICE AT MURPH CHAPEL –
SAINT PAUL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH: A GIFTS – BASED MODEL

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
December, 2014

**United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio**

Faculty Approval Page

Doctor of Ministry Final Project

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ABSTRACT

EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE FOR SERVICE AT MURPH CHAPEL – SAINT PAUL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH: A GIFTS – BASED MODEL

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This project proposes that when clergy and laity of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church possess an understanding of their spiritual gifts of grace and an awareness of community needs, they will begin to have creative conversations that will generate visions for new community – focused ministries. The strategy of inquiry employed in this qualitative project was a case study model using three data collection tools, (1) questionnaire/survey, (2) focus group discussions/observations, and (3) interview/journaling. The empowered church membership engaged in creative dialogues and participated in a new church ministry.

To my mother, the Rev. Doris Elene Lewis:
You gave me physical and spiritual life.
I will see you in the resurrection!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis celebrates thirty years as a member of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the oldest African American denomination in the world, twenty years as an ordained itinerant elder, and fourteen years as a pastor. I love ministry. I love theologizing about ministry. I love applying biblical principles to ministry. I love being in God's employment by serving people. I love the AME Church and the Church Universal.

My mother instilled in me a love for ministry but not without struggle! She and other women ministers called before me paved the way for me and other women like my cousin and my niece. She struggled to have her ministry affirmed by denominational authorities. Regardless of their affirmations or not, she did ministry. She evangelized the unsaved, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited and ministered to those in convalescent homes, sent money to prisoners, prayed for and with the drug abusers, and opened her home to the homeless. My mother, through the directions of the Holy Spirit, led me to the AME Church.

My mother's earthly ministry ended on November 3, 2013. While going through her personal effects, I found a gold mine in the trunk of her car – over 100 pairs of socks! The Queen Esther Women's Missionary Society of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church and I learned through our ministry to the homeless that socks to the homeless are like gold to a rich person. My mother was the model of a person who knew her spiritual

gifts of grace and she applied them. To her, I say “Thank you, Rev. Doris ‘Mommy’ Lewis.”

I owe a debt of love and gratitude to my friends and colleagues who travelled this journey with me. Thank you Rev. Latisha Smith, Letitia Fitzpatrick, and Rev. Gayle Davis-Culp for your countless readings of this thesis and for your candid feedback. Thank you Rev. Dr. Clyde Oden, Jr., my teaching “partner” in the Southern California Conference Board of Examiners (BOE) Class on Admissions of the AME Church. Thank you for your patience as I grew in God’s grace and knowledge. Let me also thank Rev. Dr. Kelvin T. Calloway who for the past nine years entrusted the students in the BOE Class on Admissions to Dr. Oden’s and my tutelage.

And then there is my church family, Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church in Valinda, CA. Thank you for your prayers, words of encouragement, and loving support. A special thanks to the members who served as Context Associates and my deepest heartfelt thanks to my partners in ministry, Rev. Joan M. Taylor, Rev. Janie L. Johnson, and Rev. Millicent J. Collins.

I want to thank my mentor, Dr. Jason Vickers, and the members of The Leading Church Renewal focus group, for your participation in this transformative process. To Dr. Luther Oconer and Rev. Dr. Marva Hughes, as members of my dissertation committee, you are appreciated for your candid remarks and encouraging comments. Additionally, to those preachers who recently traversed the academic corridor that led to the completion of your Doctor in Ministry degrees, Rev. Dr. Bobbie Crumbley and Rev. Dr. Arnetha Inge, you both inspired me!

To my siblings, we have been through a lot. Mom would be very proud of us. Let's stay together! To my children and grandson, and host of cousins, nieces and nephews, I am here to witness to you that with God all things are possible for those who believe. Only believe!

Finally, to my readers, particularly to pastors of small congregations, God did not call you to do everything in the congregation. God called you to be an "equipper," to help others to discover their spiritual gifts of grace and to encourage them to use their gifts as works of service to all people.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
BOE	Board of Examiners
CA	Context Associates
CFM	Community Fellowship Meal
CNN	Cable News Network
CST	Claremont School of Theology
FAME	First African Methodist Episcopal (of Los Angeles, CA)
FAS	Free African Society
LP	Listening Prayer
MC – SP	Murph Chapel – Saint Paul
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
SCC	Southern California Conference
SG	Spiritual Gifts
WIM	Women In Ministry

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ... (Ephesians 4:11-12, NRSV).

INTRODUCTION

The Christian church is commissioned to perform God's mission, that is, to transform the world starting "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). God sent the Holy Spirit to the disciples and the Christian church as a fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit, which occurred on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples and the others were infused with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Upon receipt of the Holy Spirit, each member of that assembly received a gift of grace from the Holy Spirit according to the measure of Christ's gift (Ephesians 4:7). The gifts of grace were given as a means of grace in service to others.

The project posits that the Christian church is called to be missional, that is, evangelistic and programmatic. A missional church serves the needs of the community and evangelizes souls to Jesus Christ. The focus of the thesis is centered on the service and outreach aspects of a missional church. The mission of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is "to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people."¹ The Free African Society (FAS) from which the AME Church evolved, over the years, served as the model for social involvement to local AME Church congregations. The AME Church prescribes that each local church should constitute a Commission on Missions and Welfare, and its duties are to survey and study the needs of

¹ African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church – 2012* (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 13.

the community and oversee and control the local church program of welfare and charity.² Yet, many local AME Church congregations fail to completely fulfill the AME Church's mission or the work of the Commission on Missions and Welfare by their indifference for their surrounding communities' social needs inferred by the absence of community – focused ministries designed to meet the needs of people. Thus, many local AME Church congregations have veered from God's mission for the church and their Christian duty. The congregation of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church has been derelict in its duty to serve the surrounding community.

An abundance of probable causes for the lack of community-focused ministries may exist from apathy to inexperience. One possible reason is what Bill Hybels describes as contentedness,³ that is, AME Church congregations have been lulled into a state of satisfaction, safety, and serenity.⁴ Contentedness causes people to neglect needs in the world that should elicit deep discontent when you see them going unmet.⁵

This project sets out to restructure non-missional Christian congregation into missional congregation through dynamic dialogue centered on what it means to be a missional church and the role of leadership in a missional church. “A missional congregation understands that while the idea of the kingdom of God is eternal, the way that vision get experienced and lived out will change.”⁶ Although missiology resource

² African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline*, 77.

³ Bill Hybels, *Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire That Ignites Personal Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 29.

⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁶ F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *New Wine New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 42.

materials are cited throughout the project, the project's focus is not the theology of missions; it is the doctrine of the Trinity – pneumatology, that is, the role of the Holy Spirit in a missional church. A missional church apprehends the power, presence, and position of the Holy Spirit.

The core themes of this thesis are (1) God's mission for the Christian church; (2) Jesus Christ's intentions for the Body of Christ; (3) the Holy Spirit's spiritual gifts of grace to the Christian church; (4) church leadership encouragement of the laity to use their spiritual gifts of grace; and, (5) the laity accepting their responsibility in the shared-ministry partnership by using their spiritual gifts of grace to preform works of service.

During a time when American social structures need assistance with finding solutions to the ills that plague local communities, poverty, joblessness, youth violence, and lack of health care, the answers lie within the Christian church – the people using their spiritual gifts of grace guided by the Holy Spirit. In the midst of cultural shifts where people in the neighborhood no longer look like people in the church, the assumption that “people in the neighborhood will come because we are here” must shift.⁷ The people in the church must go to the people in the neighborhood.

With church membership on the decline, particularly the absence of those generations Strauss and Howe term the Millennials and Powe refer to as the post-civil rights generation, congregations are called to rethink their definition of sacred space. “Sacred space is not confined to doing things in a particular way in a particular building, but has to do with the way we live and interact in all parts of our lives.”⁸

⁷ F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *New Wine New Wineskins*, 30.

⁸ Ibid., 51.

The Christian church can help in this effort because the Holy Spirit has equipped members of the Body of Christ with necessary skills and abilities to make a difference. Societal involvement and civic engagement are required if the Christian church is to remain relevant. People must be empowered by church leadership, and they must eagerly exhibit their God-given gifts of grace in service to others.

An Overview of the Thesis

The ministry model performed in the context of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church in Valinda, California, enlightens clergy and laity about spiritual gifts of grace and encourages them to use their spiritually endowed gifts to make a difference in the lives of their surrounding communities by creating outreach ministries, also known as works of service. It is an intergenerational and multi-ethnic model where voices of various age groups and diverse backgrounds contributed to the process.

The thesis is presented in six chapters. Chapter one presents the researcher, a narration of her spiritual formation and journey, the context of the project, and the motivation behind the project.

Chapter two discusses research materials referenced throughout the project. It presents literature related to the project under the following headings: (1) the mission of the Christian church; (2) the role of clergy and laity; (3) the Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts; and (4) the project perspectives in each category.

The theoretical foundation located in chapter three discusses the biblical, historical, and theological foundations.

The research methodology and field experience are found in chapters four and five, respectively. Chapter four describes the process by which the project was implemented. Chapter five narrates the results of the project in a case study format.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, entitled “Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion,” contains reflections on the entire three-year journey. It relates transformations that occurred throughout the process, summarizes criteria of success, suggests future applications of the ministry model, and the conclusion.

The project proposes that spiritual gifts of grace given to members of the Body of Christ can be transformed into ministries that serve others. This involves becoming a missional church that “rethinks how we engage in witnessing, hospitality, connectivity, and discipleship” and service.⁹ The task at hand is to stimulate creative conversations amongst the laity and clergy around the development of missional ministries.

⁹ Ibid., 67.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

God calls me to preform greater works by serving others. At this juncture of my life's journey, God calls me to help others discover their spiritual gifts of grace as a means to discern God's will for their lives. Perhaps this project is a response to the sources of my personal "holy discontent"¹ namely, some clergy and laity who are unaware of the power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, many pastors and teachers who fail to preach and teach about the life-changing power of the Holy Spirit, and an abundance of church members who are not fulfilling the mission of the church as mandated by Jesus. Since my endowed God-given spiritual gifts of grace are teaching, leading worship, faith, giving, administration, and wisdom, they must be used in service to others!

On Mother's Day 1984, the First African Methodist Episcopal (FAME) Church of Los Angeles became my sacred space of worship and place of acceptance. An abundance of ministries were available to my children and me. Women were unconstrained in the pulpit to lead worship. Educated people proudly embraced their African American heritage, culture, and God as they also acknowledged people of other races and ethnicities. There were age-appropriate Bible studies and Sunday school classes, choirs, Children's ministries, acolytes, and Girls' and Boys' Scouts. This was my new spiritual

¹ Bill Hybels, *Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire that Ignites Personal Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zomndervan, 2007), 24.

home! Yet, even at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, fear and doubt halted my footsteps, because the wounds and scars incurred by past church affiliations and a broken marital relationship were still fresh. The Holy Spirit, in the form of an inner voice, clearly told me to “join this church,” but I stalled. At that moment of indecisiveness, my discerning mother stepped past me and walked to the altar. Her movement propelled me past my pain. Trailing her with two children in tow, this church became my sacred space – a place where the holistic needs of my family were met through the leading of the Holy Spirit and the discernment of a spiritually gifted mother.

In November 1991, God divinely healed my body of sarcoidosis, a chronic lung disease contracted in 1987. In retrospect, perhaps the root cause of my illness was repressed grief or anger caused by a marriage that ended in divorce and other disappointments. According to Cathy Wong, “In Chinese Medicine, emotions and physical health are intimately connected...the emotions of grief and sadness are associated with the lungs, which are important in the immune system.”² Andrew Sung Park agrees that “bottling up our anger inside, we suffer from anxiety, depression, despair, and various kinds of psychosomatic illnesses.”³ Completely exhausted from the strain of breathing, seated on the edge of my bed, my confession to God was, “I give up. If you take me now, I will be with you forever. But, if you allow me to live, I will teach your children.” God responded, “All I needed you to do was surrender.” At that moment of surrender, God resurrected me to a new life in Jesus Christ for service to God’s people.

² Cathy Wong, ND, *Understanding Emotions in Traditional Chinese Medicine: Learn How Emotions Are Related to Body Systems and Symptoms*, accessed June 9, 2012, <http://altmedicine.about.com/cs/anxietydepression/a/EmotionsTCM.htm>.

³ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 53.

That memorable act of surrendering, of dying to self, was the beginning of my divine healing and transformation. My resurrection sermon was entitled How Ya Livin', which revealed that true life is obtained when you die to self. True life is selfless. Since that divine encounter, the Holy Spirit has used me to preach in venues as small as 10-member churches and as large as the vast audience of the Cable News Network (CNN). Moreover, God has prepared me to serve people.

My academic degrees a Bachelor of Arts in Religion, Master of Arts in Religion, Master of Business Administration, and presently a candidate in the Doctor of Ministry program, as well as, ordination orders of deacon and elder and three pastoral assignments in the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, assuredly demonstrated how the Holy Spirit of God prepared me for service to God's people.

In the African American culture, the statement "children are to be seen, but not heard," influenced my childhood development. Children were not allowed to openly express their opinions in the company of adults. Children were voiceless participants in the family dynamics. Therefore, children developed coping skills where they learned to keep their personal opinions to themselves. Powe explained "the idea behind this statement is one day your time will come, but until that day be satisfied to be seen."⁴

The Baptist Church tradition informed my spiritual growth and intellectual development. It was the context where God called me to preach in 1983 even though women were not allowed to preach the word of God. Yet, at FAME Church, where the voices of women preachers were accepted, I answered the call to ministry in 1989. At Claremont School of Theology (CST), my own unique preaching style was discovered, as

⁴ F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *New Wine New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 54.

well as uninhibited courage to use it. My seminary professors encouraged me to speak openly, think critically, and develop a “hermeneutics of suspicion.”⁵

Womanist theology allowed me to discover my unique voice among the voices of other Black women. Voices of educated, articulate, and thoughtful Black women like Delores W. Williams, Jacqueline Grant, and Katie Cannon resounded through their pages of script. They encouraged me to develop and share my thoughts with those who would and would not listen, those who were accepted and rejected, as well as those who were marginalized and enfranchised. This newfound prophetic voice gave me courage to speak up when others were silent without the approval or permission of others to say what God gave me to say. Additionally, my newfound expressive courage, what Katie Cannon calls “unshouted courage,” was tempered with spirituality.⁶ I heard what sounded like the voice of God coming from my mouth.

It was important to me to not be perceived as an angry, oppressed Black woman. Because the voices of Black women were muted for centuries, when they finally had opportunities to speak, some spoke out of anger and hurt, and rightfully so. Womanist Theology studies produced in me a loud, bold, and passionate voice. The infilling of the Holy Spirit tuned this voice to the right timbre of love and compassion necessary when speaking and encouraging the voiceless to speak to people of power. The task at hand is to empower the voiceless oppressed to find and develop their voices, and to allow the youth the opportunity to be heard.

⁵ David Stewart, “The Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” *Journal of Literature & Theology*, Vol. 3, No. 3, (Oxford University Press, November 1989), 1.

⁶ Katie Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press, 1988), 143-144.

Pastoral counseling class at CST taught me that sensitivity and compassion are tools one needs to feel the hearts of hurting people. Sandra D. Wilson purports that “when we hurt, we need hope to believe that there really is some help for us to stop hurting---or at least to hurt less,” because “a sense of hopelessness can be fatal.”⁷ Andrew Sun Park writes that people “need to hear a message of how to heal their wounds.”⁸ God gave me a heart to minister to God’s broken children. My life experiences, good and bad, should be shared with others through ministry. God was and is preparing me to be a “wounded healer.”⁹ My task is to assist “the sinned-against to be liberated,”¹⁰ and the sinner to receive salvation.

Through the theologies of mystics Henry Nouwen, Thomas Merton, and Howard Thurman, the meaning of contemplativeness was discovered. God spoke in the quietness. As a child, I often sat quietly in my bedroom listening to the stillness. In the quietness, God’s voice was heard. I now understand and embrace my role as a contemplative.

The lessons learned during ministerial training were invaluable. Exposed to exceptional church administration skills within and beyond the local church congregation allowed me to serve in a variety of ministerial and corporate positions. I served as Minister of Youth and the Planning and Development Officer for FAME Church, Los Angeles. I represented the local church in various local community and national venues, served as secretary of the Southern California Conference (SCC) AME Ministerial

⁷ Sandra Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People* (Discovery House Publishers, 2010), 118-120, Kindle.

⁸ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 5.

⁹ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1972).

¹⁰ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 7.

Alliance, President/Coordinator of the SCC AME Women In Ministry (WIM), and Administrative Assistant to one of the AME Bishops of the Fifth Episcopal District. Still, my desire to do more for God intensified. God was calling me to do greater work.

As an ordained clergy on staff at FAME Church, Los Angeles, it was time to move from the comforts of associate ministry to the challenges of senior pastoral ministry. Others did not sense or understand this compelled desire to leave “the nest.” God was calling me to travel to an unfamiliar place in life – a destination where God would lead me. This experience strongly resembled William J. Seymour’s experience when he decided to leave Houston, Texas to accept an invitation to pastor in Los Angeles, California. Charles F. Parham, Seymour’s mentor, “made it clear to Seymour just how ‘disappointed’ he was in his decision,” because he planned to send Seymour to evangelize in Texas.¹¹ When the mentor’s plan conflicts with God’s plan—God’s plan must prevail.

Unemployed and needing means to support my family, God directed me to a place already prepared for me along this journey. Using previously acquired skills in proposal and grant writing, I marketed myself and solicited contracts from non-profit agencies. My first contract was signed after three months of being unemployed—it paid \$6,000.00. Other contracts came by referral. I found part-time employment that turned into fifteen years of full-time employment, enrolled in a university, completed a Master of Business Administration degree, and received my first pastoral assignment.

Senior pastors advise novice pastors to expect to perform every church function existing from the pulpit to the parking lot. The first pastoral assignment, especially for

¹¹ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), 51.

women, was usually to a church congregation with a membership of less than fifty. As a bi-vocational pastor and literally attempting to fulfill this dictate, symptoms of stress and burnout were beginning to surface. Ministerial colleagues were traveling along this distressing path. Thus, an impetus behind project was a search for solutions to manage my pastoral duties and to solicit more involvement of local church leaders and membership.

Thom Rainer lists seven reasons why pastors burnout:

1. The 24/7 mentality. Many pastors can't "turn off" work in their mind. Even on their days off, they are waiting for that next telephone call or next crisis. Thus, they never relax.
2. Conflict. I often heard it said that conflict is not the problem; it's how we handle conflict. That's true to a point. But if church conflict and criticisms are ongoing, pastors wear down. They eventually burn out.
3. Expectations. All pastors would be problem-free if they were omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. Of course, no pastor can meet all the expectations of church members. But many try. And they burn out as a result.
4. Unwillingness to let go. Several years ago I was with a pastor who was frantically trying to sort the mail that had just arrived. He was hurrying to go to his next meeting. I asked him why he didn't let someone else take care of some of things he was trying to do. His blank stare was his answer. He quit ministry three months later and never returned.
5. No friends. Many pastors fail to develop meaningful friendships, people with whom they can "let their hair down." Without such outlets, burnout is more likely.
6. Not suited for some tasks. This issue is similar to trying to meet everyone's expectations. First, such attempts are physically impossible. Second, pastors are not equipped to do everything well. But many try and many fail.
7. No life outside the church. I am amazed at the number of pastors who have no meaningful hobbies or recreational activities outside the church. I am less amazed when those pastors burn out and drop out.¹²

¹² Thom S. Rainer, "Seven Reasons Pastors Burn Out" ThomRainer.com, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://thomrainer.com/2013/09/28/seven-reasons-pastors-burn-out/>.

One response to Rainer advised churches to have a “clear understanding of their pastors’ strengths and weaknesses. Tools such as DISC [Personality Profile], Predictive Index, and Spiritual Gift assessments should be requirements. Church staff should be built to balance spiritual gifts, personality types, and skill sets. Pastoral assignments should be based more on skill sets and less on job titles.”¹³

Now eight years into my third pastoral assignment at Murph Chapel – SaintPaul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Valinda, California, I was compelled to discover a solution to this burnout dilemma. Woodward frames this transformation as becoming a cultural architect to “help shape the culture of the congregation in theological and practical ways.”¹⁴

Context

Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church is located in Southern California, in two Los Angeles County government jurisdictions; The City of West Covina and Valinda, an unincorporated area. The physical building is located in Valinda, and the recently purchased land adjacent to the building is located in West Covina.

¹³ Lee Haley, “Seven Responses to Prevent Pastor Burnout,” ThomRainer.com, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://thomrainer.com/2013/09/30/seven-responses-to-prevent-pastor-burnout/>.

¹⁴ JR Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World*, (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 225.

Los Angeles County

According to the 2010 Census, Los Angeles County is the first most populated county in the State of California out of fifty-eight counties, with a population of 9,818,605 people. Table 1.1 is a breakdown of the ethnic groups and populations of Los Angeles County. The median age for females is 35.9 years and for males, 33.6 years, and 24.5% of the Los Angeles County population is under 18.¹⁵

Table 1.1. Los Angeles County: Ethnic Groups and Populations

ETHNIC GROUP	POPULATION	
	N	%
Hispanic	4,687,889	47.7
White	2,728,321	27.8
Asian	1,325,671	13.5
Black	815,086	8.3
Multi-Ethnic (two or more races)	194,921	2.0
American Indian/Pacific Islander/Some	66,717	0.7
Other Races		

Source: Data from Cubit Planning, Inc., California Demographics, Los Angeles County, 2010.

¹⁵ Cubit Planning, Inc., *California Demographics, Los Angeles County*, accessed June 15, 2012, <http://www.california-demographics.com/los-angeles-county-demographics>.

Valinda

Valinda is an unincorporated area in the 5th supervisorial district of Los Angeles County in the San Gabriel Valley. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is the governing body, rather than a locally elected mayor and city council. As of the 2010 census, the population was 22,822. The breakdown of the ethnic groups and populations are listed in Table 1.2. The median age for females is 32.7 years and for males, it is 30.7 years, and 29.2% of the population is under 18.¹⁶

Table 1.2. Valinda, California: Ethnic Groups and Populations

ETHNIC GROUP	POPULATION	
	N	%
Hispanic	17,977	78.8
White	1,597	7.0
Asian	2,627	11.5
Black	356	1.6
Multi-Ethnic (two or more races)	151	0.7
American Indian/Pacific Islander/Some Other	114	0.5
Races		

Source: Data from Cubit Planning, Inc., Valinda Demographics, Los Angeles County, 2010.

¹⁶ Cubit Planning, Inc., *California Demographics, Los Angeles County*, accessed June 15, 2012, <http://www.california-demographics.com/valinda-demographics>.

West Covina

Unlike Valinda, the City of West Covina has been incorporated since 1923. The “population in 1930 was 769 and blossomed to 1,549 in 1940.” “West Covina became America’s fastest growing city between 1950 and 1960, with the population increasing 1,000 percent from less than 5,000 to more than 50,000 citizens.”¹⁷ The 2010 census data reported the number of residents as 106,098. The city’s largest ethnic group is Hispanic. The ethnic groups and populations of the City of West Covina are listed in Table 1.3. The median age for females is 37.9 years and for males, it is 34.0 years, and 24.6% of the population is under 18.¹⁸

Table 1.3. West Covina, California: Ethnic Groups and Populations

ETHNIC GROUP	POPULATION	
	N	%
Hispanic	56,471	53.2
White	16,196	25.3
Asian	26,834	15.3
Black	4,260	4.0
Multi-Ethnic (two or more races)	1,775	1.7
American Indian/Pacific Islander/Some	562	0.5
Other Races		

Source: Data from Cubit Planning, Inc., West Covina Demographics, Los Angeles County, 2010.

¹⁷ City of West Covina Website, accessed June 17, 2012, <http://www.westcovina.org/about/history/default.asp>.

¹⁸ Cubit Planning, Inc., *California Demographics, Los Angeles County*, accessed June 15, 2012, <http://www.california-demographics.com/west-covina-demographics>.

Demographics of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church

This congregation is organized by commonality of age and cultural ethnicity.¹⁹

The average age of the congregation is sixty-five years, and the largest population is over age sixty-five years. The next larger group is under twenty-one years, and, lastly, there is a sparse representation of those between the ages of twenty-one to sixty. Many of the children who grew up in the congregation left, and they return on special occasions (Mother's Day, Father's Day, Christmas, Easter, parent's birthday), or they do not attend church. The church has become their parents' church.

Most of the congregants migrated from the mid-Western and Southern states to Los Angeles, then later to the West Covina area (30 miles east) between the mid-1960s to the early 1970s in search of a better environment to raise their children. According to the National Park Services "a small number of African Americans settled in the outer suburbs of Los Angeles by 1960, including Pasadena, Monrovia, Altadena, Santa Monica, and Pomona."²⁰ During this migration period, "Los Angeles was one of the most segregated cities in the United States, and the most lucrative new jobs were beyond the reach of the increasingly impoverished African American community. Frustrations exploded in August 1965, sparked by the alleged beating of an African American motorist by two California Highway Patrol officers in the community of Watts. Six days of unprecedented, destructive rioting ensued. Racial relations improved in the aftermath

¹⁹ Nancy Ammerman, "Culture and Identity in the Congregation" in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 80.

²⁰ United States Department of Interior National Park Services, *Historic Resources Associated with African Americans in Los Angeles*, accessed July 12, 2012, http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/afam/2010/afam_los_angeles.htm.

of the riot, leading to the election of the city's first African American mayor, Tom Bradley, in 1973.”²¹

Even though the congregation is multiethnic, the vast majority of the members are African American. The seniors and young adults are African American. The youth are biracial, that is, of African American and Hispanic heritage, and one Chinese American young adult. Since 2006, the church leases space to a mostly Spanish-speaking Hispanic congregation. The two congregations conduct worship services in Spanish and English on Thanksgiving Day and Watch Night (December 31).

A good majority of the senior members are college graduates, who are retired from professional careers, such as educators, medical professionals, and law enforcement officers. Many have been married nearly fifty years. They are civic-minded and interested in the local politics. Approximately 75% of the group ages thirty to seventy are college graduates or have some college experience. The younger membership struggles with stable employment and parenting issues. Given this rich dichotomous church membership, opportunities exist where each group could benefit from the other through knowledge and experience exchanges, resulting in a sense of worth and community by all parties involved. It is in this context that the congregation has opportunities to do ministry within the walls of the church and in the local community.

Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church’s beginning bears some resemblance to the history of the first African American church, known as Mother Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church started in a home with twelve charter members in 1980. The newly formed congregation relocated

²¹ Mary Ann Irwin, *Los Angeles*, accessed July 16, 2012, <http://www.irwinator.com/l26/wdoc200.htm>.

from the home to the chapel of the West Covina United Methodist Church. In 1985, they leased with an option to buy a gasoline service station – the current building at 1381 Pass and Covina Road in Valinda, California. “In 1791, Richard Allen purchased a former blacksmith shop, moved it to 6th Street between Lombard and Pine Streets, and established the Blacksmith Shop Meeting House. In 1794, Bishop Francis A. Asbury of the Methodist Episcopal Church dedicated the building, and in 1799, Allen was ordained a deacon and the pastor of the newly formed congregation.”²² In 1816, Allen was “ordained an elder, and then consecrated as bishop – the first black to hold such an office in America.”²³ Although the two congregations historical backgrounds converge in many areas, they diverge in the matter of pastoral leadership.

Richard Allen’s pastorate at Mother Bethel lasted thirty – one years, from 1787 to 1818. Seven pastors have served Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church in its short-lived existence of thirty-three years. Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Orange County, California, started his church in 1980, the same year of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church’s inception. He believes that the longevity of the pastor is a key factor to a healthy church, which results in church membership growth. Warren addresses the effects of the rotating pastor on a congregation:

²² Seventh Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church Website, *History*, accessed June 15, 2012, http://www.ame7.org/history/4_horsemen.htm.

²³ Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, “Richard Allen: Founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church,” in *Christianity Today*, accessed June 12, 2012, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/denominationalfounders/richardallen.html>.

...The longevity of the leadership is a critical factor for the health and growth of a church family. Long pastorates make deep, trusting, and caring relationships possible. Without those kinds of relationships, a pastor won't accomplish much of lasting value. Churches who rotate pastors every few years will never experience consistent growth...by intentionally limiting the tenure of pastors in the local congregation; they create "lame duck" ministers. Few people want to follow a leader who isn't going to be around a year from now. The pastor wants to start all sorts of new projects, but the members will be reticent because they will be the ones having to live with the consequences long after the pastor has been moved to another church.²⁴

Conjecture

In October 2006, my pastoral tenure commenced at Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church, Valinda, California. The assignment came with instructions from the Episcopal leader to lead this congregation through a building expansion project. For the first few years, the members of the congregation and I focused on the church's physical structure. We met with architectures, construction companies, and design-build teams. We purchased land and created preliminary drawings and plans. We met with government agencies, the Los Angeles County and the City of West Covina Planning Commissions. We conducted capital campaigns and raised funds for the new structure. Our focus was on the brick and mortar. We were going to build a new church. At every Annual Conference, we gave a progress report of our three-phased plan to build our new church. Our Annual report always concluded that ensuing year would probably be the year to break ground for the new structure. Yet, after six years of planning, the new building is not constructed. Perhaps the members are reticent about taking on a capital project of this magnitude. Some believe the congregation is not large enough and more

²⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 31.

members are needed before these expenses are incurred. Others fear the probability of pastoral reassignment at the direction of the AME Bishop.

In most African American churches where a majority of the members of the congregation are from “the Civil Rights Generation, born between 1921 and 1940,”²⁵ the pastor is expected to lead the congregation and to be the voice of the African American community.²⁶ As the pastor/leader, there is an expectation of me to establish the church’s vision. However, as opposed to solely taking on this charge, the people were invited to join in prayer to seek God’s guidance and future directions. The following vision statement was developed in partnership with the members of the congregation: “We are called to go deeper in God’s Word and our worship to God, wider in our witness of Jesus Christ, and higher in the work of the Holy Spirit.”²⁷ Members were challenged to (1) commit to studying God’s word by reading their Bible and attending Sunday school and Bible study, (2) actively participate in worship, (3) widen their evangelistic witness of Jesus, that is, tell their conversion stories, and (4) develop and implement ministries that provide services to people in need.

On one occasion, while making photocopies of our Annual Report at a neighborhood printing facility, a young man recognized the picture of the church building. He asked me if anyone occupied that building or was it abandoned, because he never saw any activities at the building. If it is the perception of the community that nobody’s home then we cannot expect them to come and visit. We needed to increase our

²⁵ F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *New Wine New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 7.

²⁶ F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *New Wine New Wineskins*, 11.

²⁷ This is the mission statement of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church in Valinda, CA developed in 2012.

visibility in the neighborhood by opening our doors on a daily basis and extending invitations our neighbors to join us. As I contemplated and prayed about our congregation's role in this community, and how to engage everyone in the process, it became clear that the church is more than the building. The people are the church. The spiritual bodies within the walls of the building are tasked to minister to the needs of those within and outside the walls of the building. The presence of the members of the congregation in the community is needed.

In 1991, I stood at death's door, but it was not time for me to walk through the door. It has been nearly twenty years since I walked the halls of a theological academy. Upon completing the Master of Arts degree, I knew my educational studies were incomplete and that one day I would return. It happened three years ago when I heard God's voice once again call me to do greater things. Consumed with developing a ministry model for discovering the spiritual gifts of grace and putting them to work to serve others, the Holy Spirit led me to Ephesians 4:7-13 and to United Theological Seminary (UTS) to do the necessary theoretical research as preparation to develop and implement the process.

The outgrowth of my healing and the awareness of my spiritual gifts have driven me to desire to minister to others by helping them to discover and apply their spiritual gifts as means to develop ministries to serve others. Healing takes place in the midst of service to others. The process begins in my present context with members of my local congregation and implementing the project, Equipping God's People for Service at Murph Chapel – Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church: A Gifts – Based Model.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

This chapter discusses the research literature underpinning the ministry model, “Equipping God’s People for Service at Murph Chapel – Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church: A Gifts – Based Model.” The title of the project presupposes that God’s people (the Christian church), particularly at Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church, are equipped with spiritual gifts of grace provided by the Holy Spirit to perform works of service. The reviewed research literature assisted in (1) identifying the mission of the Christian church, which guides the types of required works of service, (2) defining the roles of clergy and laity in the Christian church in performing the works of service, and (3) recognizing the Holy Spirit as the one who equips God’s people with spiritual gifts of grace for service. What follows are discussions of research materials on these topics.

The Mission of the Christian Church

As the world enters a post-modern perspective, the answer to the question, “What does it mean to be the church today?” becomes imperative as Christian congregations search for a balance between significance and relevancy.¹ Craig Nesson phrases the

¹ JR Woodward, *Creating A Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downer Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 27.

question as “What are congregations for?”² Darrell Guder and others inquire about the mission of the Christian church in North America, and F. Douglas Powe speaks about the importance of understanding cultural shifts within the African American community.³

Divergent viewpoints exist regarding the mission of the Christian church. On the one hand, some view the mission of the Christian church as solely evangelistic, that is, proclaiming “a gospel which appears to have little interest in the conditions in which people find themselves, since the preachers’ only concern seems to be the saving of souls from eternal damnation.”⁴ On the other hand, the role of the Christian church is socially programmatic, that is, serving the needs of the homeless people, the unemployed, fostering children, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the prisoner (Matthew 25:35-36). The Christian church’s role is missional since most congregations “are now located in their own mission locations (the required work reveals itself as needs of the community), which creates opportunities for new ministries.”⁵ Therefore, the Christian church is called to be both evangelistic and socially programmatic.

Nessan’s criticism of the congregation whose mission is inwardly focused is the mission of a congregation may eventually shrink to preoccupation about holding worship services and paying the bills. Guder warns any Christian church that shares this view

² Craig L. Nessan, *Beyond Maintenance To Mission: A Theology of the Congregation*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), xi.

³ F. Douglas Powe, Jr., *New Wine New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 2.

⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 7.

⁵ Craig Van Gelder, ed., *The Missional Church and Denominations: Helping Congregations Develop a Missional Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 1-2.

possesses a post-Christendom's concern for the church's institutional maintenance as opposed to God's mission and asserts that mission is not just a program of the church.⁶ Guder defines the church as God-sent people. He purports that either mission defines us or we reduce the scope of the gospel and the mandate of the church. Thus, our challenge today is to move from church with mission to missional church, and to move from inward preoccupations with programs and church growth schemes to an outward focus of transforming the world.⁷ Powe argues that it is time for African American churches to rethink how they engage in witnessing, hospitality, connectivity, and discipleship.⁸

David Bosch's response to the earlier question is that the Bible clearly commands world mission.⁹ Bosch's seminal work, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, is probably one of the most comprehensive discussions on revising the definition of the mission of the Christian church. Although the first publication was released in 1991, this project references the 20th Anniversary Edition published in 2011. Bosch "reveals Christian mission to be far deeper and more subversive than expanding the size of the church or leading a social revolution."¹⁰ "The thesis of the book is that it is neither possible nor proper to attempt a revised definition of mission without taking a thorough look at the vicissitudes of missions and the missionary idea during the past

⁶ Darrell L. Guder, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 7.

⁷ Guder, *Missional Church*, 6.

⁸ Powe, *New Wine New Wineskins*, 67.

⁹ Bosch, 7.

¹⁰ Bosch, xvii.

twenty centuries of Christian church history.”¹¹ His book represents a theoretical foundation supporting the transformation of the Christian church’s mission by integrating its three sections: (1) Biblical foundation, Part 1: New Testament Models of Mission, chapters one through four; (2) Historical foundation, Part 2: Historical Paradigms of Missions, chapters five through nine; and lastly, (3) Theological foundation, Part 3: Toward a Relevant Missiology, chapters ten through thirteen. The Anniversary Edition culminates with the chapter, “The Continuing Transformation of Mission: David J. Bosch’s Living Legacy: 1991- 2011,” which leads into the modern day discussion on the emergence of the missional church.

In 1998, seven years after Bosch’s book, Darrell L. Guder, project coordinator and editor of the book, *Missional Church: A Vision for Sending of the Church in North America*, brought together a team of six researchers to review literature and to reflect theologically for three years on what it meant to be the church in North America. The missional group of authors whose literature informed this project includes Darrell L. Guder, Lois Barrett, Inagrace T. Dietterich, George Hunsberger, Alan J. Roxburgh, and Craig Van Gelder. Guder discovers that “North America religiosity is changing profoundly by becoming more pluralistic, more individualistic, and more private.”¹² Dietterich believes “the purpose of missional communities is to be a source of radical hope, to witness to the new identity and vision, the new way of life that has become a social reality in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹³

¹¹ Bosch, 8.

¹² Darrell Guder, *Missional Church*, 1.

¹³Ibid., 153.

Moreover, Powe examines the missional church from the perspective of the African American church. He explains that, “African American congregations have to develop a new mindset about witnessing that moves beyond an internal focus. The church is God’s vessel for impacting society, but the church is not an end in itself.”¹⁴

Critics of the missional church include Brannon Howse, Jesse Johnson, John Piper, Anthony Bradley and others. Howse, in his article “Missional: When Evangelicals Support The Social Gospel/Social Justice by Another Name,” argues that pastors who use the term missional are “not teachable, theologically shallow, non-discerning or perhaps it is that they are orthodox but are trying to be hip and relevant.”¹⁵ He believes that missional theology is too liberal. Other proponents of Howse’s view call it “new legalism,” claiming “[b]eing a ‘radical,’ ‘missional’ Christian is slowly becoming the ‘new legalism.’ We need more ordinary God and people lovers.”¹⁶

The Role of Clergy and Laity

Local Christian churches, composed of groups of believers in Jesus Christ, are considered to be the Body of Christ. “God has chosen to make the Body of Christ an organism, Jesus being the head and each member functioning with one or more spiritual

¹⁴ Powe, *New Wine New Wineskins*, 70.

¹⁵ Brannon Howse, “Missional: When Evangelicals Support The Social Gospel/Social Justice by Another Name,” (May 6, 2013), accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.worldviewweekend.com/print/news/article/missional-when-evangelicals-support-social-gospelsocial-justice-another-name>.

¹⁶ Anthony Bradley, “The ‘new legalism’,” *World Magazine Online*, (May 4, 2013), accessed August 15, 2014, http://www.worldmag.com/2013/05/the_new_legalism.

gifts.”¹⁷ Just as the physical body is made up of many members and each has a different function, “the Body of Christ operates exactly like the human body. Each Christian is a member of the Body of Christ, and as such has a particular function to perform.”¹⁸ Wagner points out that “God Himself, of course, is the One who designed the Body of Christ.”¹⁹ Therefore, God is the architect of the church.

In the Body of Christ, all members are called or sent to missional work. However, some are commissioned. Clergy are ordained and commissioned for ecclesiastical services, that is, the works of word and sacrament. The main purposes of pastoral leadership are “to help congregations (1) discern and stay oriented to their mission, (2) face developmental challenges, and (3) resolve issues that impede them from fulfilling their unique potential as missional communities.”²⁰

Yet, clustered in the confines of denominational communities are activities exclusive for the local church context described as the role of Christian churches. In agreement with Nessan, “the situation in which the church finds itself at the beginning of a new millennium – the reality of post-Christendom – calls for a renewal of vision about how God seeks to engage Christian congregations.”²¹ If Christian congregations are to remain relevant, they must seek new means of societal engagement and involvement. “Congregation cannot think, ‘We have built it, they will come.’ The new mindset has to

¹⁷ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2012), 29.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹ Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 28.

²⁰ E. Fahlbusch and G. W. Bromiley, (1999-2003). Vol. 2: The encyclopedia of Christianity. (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill), 478.

²¹ Nessan, *Beyond Maintenance to Mission*, page xi.

be ‘We must go out and find them.’”²² The answer lies within congregations, and people must be empowered and eager to exercise their God – given gifts of grace to serve others.

All members of the AME Church, clergy and laity, are called to works of service. However, God commissions some men and women for works of word and sacrament, that is, to preach and teach from scripture and to administer the sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism. They are called to instruct and teach people what is necessary for salvation, to minister the sacraments, to minister the doctrine and discipline of Christ, and to “be diligent in prayer and the reading of the Holy Scriptures.”²³ Those who enter into this vocation are ordained into the offices of deacon and elder for specific duties. The clergy ordination sets people aside for highly specific tasks, that is, to preach the word and administer the sacraments. “The Reformation notion of ‘the priesthood of all believers’ by no means denigrated the pastoral office... Rather, it taught that the pastoral office is a vocation, a calling from God with its own responsibilities, authority, and blessings. But it also taught that laypeople as well have vocations, callings.”²⁴ The AME Church is a proponent of the theological concept the priesthood of all believers, where “each individual shares the responsibility of ministering to the other members of the community of believers.”²⁵ The works of service, God’s mission, are performed in partnership. It is a shared – ministry; the ministry of all believers.

²² Powe, *New Wine New Wineskins*, 70.

²³ Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 526, 531-532.

²⁴ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., (2002-03-22). *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Kindle Locations 163-166). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

²⁵ “Priesthood of All Believers,” *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*, accessed August 14, 2014, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/priesthood%20of%20all%20believers>.

C. Peter Wagner's definition of the ministry of all believers is "Laypeople should be empowered to discover their spiritual gift and through them participate in the authentic ministry of the church."²⁶

Bauknight asserts,

It is my conviction that leadership in the New Testament church utilized a working ecclesiology of spiritual gifts (charism) that inform contemporary ecclesiology and ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12). Paul and others believed that God supplies abundant spiritual gifts to equip the church for "the work of ministry, [and] for building up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). Evoking one another's spiritual gifts and providing for basic orders of ministry were evident among the earliest communities of believers (Acts 6). Apostles preached the kerygma of the risen Christ. Teachers taught people the content and tradition of Christian faith. Elders provided oversight and leadership of the congregation. Administrators handled the business functions of the community. Pastors offered care and counsel to the lonely, the sick, and the bereaved. Deacons served the personal needs of the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Thus, the laos of God were gifted for ministry (Romans 12:4-8).²⁷

A theology of shared – ministry or partnership is located at the apex of the biblical, historical, and theological foundations of this thesis. Jesus called his disciples into partnership with him. Richard Allen partnered with community leaders to form the Free African Society. The apostle Paul encouraged partnership. The Holy Spirit called believers and continues to call them into partnership with him. Partnership means diversity and "thrives on the mutual exchange of gifts."²⁸ It extinguishes total authority from one person and creates a community of shared control. The shared – ministry model is the ministry of all believers.

²⁶ Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 17.

²⁷ Brian K. Bauknight, "Building a Team Through Spiritual Gifts," in *Equipping the Saints: Mobilizing Laity for Ministry*, ed. Michael J. Christensen with Carl E. Savage (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 102.

²⁸ James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *The Promise of Partnership: A Model of Collaborative Ministry*, An Authors Guild Backinprint.com Edition (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.com, 2000), 7.

In a charismatic church culture, the pastor is usually the catalyst for change. Oftentimes, the pastor develops a ministry and presents it to the laity with the expectation they will adopt, orchestrate, and assume responsibility for the ministry. Several outcomes result from this model of ministry development: (1) Shooting Star Syndrome; (2) Top – Down Assignment; and (3) Incompatible ministry to laity.

In the shooting star syndrome, the project commences with great enthusiasm and fanfare, but eventually it fizzles out because the laity is not organically invested in the ministry. In other words, since it was not their idea, they are not responsible for the success or failure of the ministry.

In the top – down assignment, since the pastor created it, he or she is the de facto leader of the ministry although he or she delegates the responsibilities to the laity. The pastor dictates the direction for the ministry; the laity executes the assignments. Again, the laity does not own the ministry, and thusly, is not accountable for the success or failure of the ministry.

Lastly, the laity may not be suited for the type of proposed ministry. Perhaps they are incompatible with the particular ministry because God has not gifted them for that ministry. As in the previously mentioned models, the risk is inactivity of the ministry.

Polycentric leadership is paramount over hierarchical leadership.²⁹ When people are allowed freedom to exercise their God-given gifts in egalitarian communities and not in atmospheres of dictatorship or autocracy, the result is unencumbered ministry.

JR Woodward advances culture as an approach to influence the local Christian church. “To change the ethos of the church we also need to change our approach to

²⁹ Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 21.

leadership.”³⁰ For Woodward “it is the role of Spirit-filled leaders to create a missional culture with the congregation.”³¹ According to Woodward, by definition, a leader or an equiper, is a cultural architect and churches need leaders who are cultural architects.³² In the context of the AME Church, lay equippers are known as class leaders.³³ “[T]he culture of a group can either help or hinder the community from fulfilling her mission in God’s world.”³⁴

If the pastor attempts to lead every ministry, he or she runs the risk of suffering from burnout and relegates the laity to a powerless place in the Body of Christ. When the pastor leads through delegation and allows the laity to display and demonstrate their God – given gifts, people are empowered and engaged to do ministry. Wagner says, “It takes leadership to make sure that the members of the Body are in their proper place and that proper doors are opened for them to use their spiritual gifts.”³⁵ When the Holy Spirit is in charge, the pastor and people are energized, and transformation occurs within the Body of Christ, as well as the community beyond the walls of the church building.

Jason Vickers states “the church is above all a charismatic community whose life depends entirely on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.”³⁶ This statement applies

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 33.

³² Ibid., 61.

³³ *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2012* (Kindle Locations 1607-1608). AMEC Sunday School Union. Kindle Edition.

³⁴ Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 61.

³⁵ Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 36.

³⁶ Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011), 47.

to many African American congregations. Each member's purpose in the Body of Christ is determined by his or her spiritual gift or combination of gifts.³⁷ "There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit...But to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:4 – 7). Members of the Body of Christ receive various spiritual gifts – "special endowments of supernatural energy," freely given by the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of people and to glorify God.³⁸ The spiritual gifts are given to people to help build up the community of faith. They are used as God's vehicles of service. In other words, spiritual gifts are used to serve people and to promote unity. Unity is promoted when people are allowed freedom to exercise their God – given gifts "through their own motivation and having the time of their lives doing what God intended them to do and be" in community and not in a dictatorship atmosphere.³⁹

Pastor John MacArthur says, "No local congregation will be what it should be, what Jesus prayed that it would be, what the Holy Spirit gifted it and empowered it to be, until it understands spiritual gifts."⁴⁰

³⁷ Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 26.

³⁸ M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (1 Cor. 12:1) (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887).

³⁹ R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 1993), 34.

⁴⁰ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Spiritual Gifts*, 29.

The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts of Grace

According to surveys conducted by the Barna Group, “during the past five years, millions of the nation’s born again adults have changed their views on the [spiritual] gifts.” Most Christians either (1) have not heard of spiritual gifts, (2) do not know what they are, (3) do not believe God gave them spiritual gifts, or (4) are not sure if they have spiritual gifts.⁴¹

The following five authors were consulted on spiritual gifts of grace, Max Turner; C. Peter Wagner, Charles V. Bryant, George O. McCalep, Jr., and Bruce Bugbee. Of the five authors, Turner’s book is the most comprehensive account of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts. The book is configured in two parts: Part I: The Development of New Testament Pneumatology; and Part II: Spiritual Gifts in the New Testament Church and Today. Part I is a historical account demonstrating the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the New Testament. Turner elucidates the Holy Spirit’s presence in the Synoptic Tradition, the Johannine Community, the Acts of the Apostles, and certainly in the Pauline churches.

In the second half of the book, Turner begins by examining three prototypical gifts, prophecy, tongues, and healing. He extracted them from Paul’s list in 1 Corinthians 12:8 – 10 (utterance of wisdom, utterance of knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, various kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues). They were used to provide a list of typical characteristics that united the three

⁴¹ The Barna Group, Ltd. <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/32-awareness-of-spiritual-gifts-is-changing?q=awareness+spiritual+gifts+changing>

helping to identify all further members of the class denoted by the expression spiritual gifts.⁴²

The author consulted on spiritual gifts agree that the Body of Christ, members of the Christian church, are equipped with spiritual gifts of grace bestowed by the Holy Spirit. However, they diverge on the number of spiritual gifts of grace, which varies from twenty – one to thirty – two (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Reviewed Spiritual Gifts Assessments

	Wagner	Bryant	McCalep	Bugbee
Number of Spiritual Gifts	28 (He tests for 27)	32	21	23
Number of Assessment Questions	135	160	86	133

Although the method used to discover spiritual gifts of grace is similar, that is, responding to a series of questions based on the person's experience followed by recording the responses in a table that corresponds to a spiritual gift of grace, the dissimilarity of the tests are the number of questions ranging from 86 to 160 (see Table 2.1).

C. Peter Wagner appears to have completed the most extensive research on developing assessment tools to discover the spiritual gifts of grace. Although other spiritual gift assessment tools exist; the Wagner-Modified Hout Questionnaire appeared to be the most thorough in its examination for spiritual gifts. In 2012, Wagner expanded his list of twenty-five spiritual gifts to include three additions, martyrdom, apostleship, and worship leader; however, his assessment tool tests for twenty-seven. Wagner omitted the gift of martyrdom from the questionnaire; he acknowledged that after several attempts he could

⁴² Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 255.

not find a valid way to test for it. Wagner's list of twenty-eight spiritual gifts are mainly found in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Corinthians 7, 13 – 14, Ephesians 3, and 1 Peter 4, in addition to a few Old Testament scripture references. They are listed in Table 2.2. Although other spiritual gift assessment tools exist, this product appeared to be the most thorough in its examination for spiritual gifts.

Table 2.2. C. Peter Wagner's 2012 List of Spiritual Gifts⁴³

A. Prophecy (preaching, inspired utterance)	H. Giving (contributing, generosity, sharing)	O. Leadership (authority, ruling)	V. Celibacy (continence)
B. Pastor (caring for God's people)	I. Helps	P. Administration (governments, getting others to work together)	W. Intercession
C. Teaching	J. Mercy (sympathy, comfort to the sorrowing, showing kindness)	Q. Miracles (doing great deeds)	X. Deliverance (exorcism)
D. Wisdom (wise advise, wise speech)	K. Missionary	R. Healing	Y. Service (ministry)
E. Knowledge (studying, speaking with knowledge)	L. Evangelist	S. Tongues (speaking in languages never learned, ecstatic utterance)	Z. Apostle
F. Exhortation (stimulating faith, encouraging)	M. Hospitality	T. Interpretation of tongues	AA. Leading worship
G. Discerning of Spirits (discrimination in spiritual matters)	N. Faith	U. Voluntary Poverty	* Martyrdom

Brandon Howse and others, although they believe in the spiritual gifts of grace, refute the methodology used to identify them. They disagree with using psychological evaluations as a means to determine one's gift(s) from the Holy Spirit.

⁴³ Wagner, 7, 267-274.

Ministry Model Perspectives

Although this project has accessed research literature from the discipline of missiology, the theological foundation is grounded in the doctrine of the Trinity, the creative power of the Trinitarian God.

In the gospel according to Matthew, Jesus Christ mandated the mission to his disciples when he commissioned them by saying, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20a).

The post-modern definition of the Christian church’s mission is applied. This researcher supports a symbiotic mission of the Christian church, that is, the mission of the Christian church is both evangelistic and socially programmatic in nature where all people benefit. It involves “ministering to the needs of the members and carrying forth the gospel beyond themselves to their communities and world.”⁴⁴ However, the African American missional model for making disciples offered by Powe, namely, “seek[ing] to ignite a flame in the people to develop a deeper relationship with Jesus,”⁴⁵ is the adopted methodology.

The laity is called to a life of service to people for the purpose of using their God – given gifts. “Ephesians 4 tells us that when spiritual gifts are in operation, the whole Body matures.”⁴⁶ Spiritual gifts can be transformed into models of ministries to serve the needs of people, thus making the congregation significant in the community-at-large, and

⁴⁴ Nesson

⁴⁵ Powe, *New Wine Wineskins*, 81.

⁴⁶ C. Peter Wagner. *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2012), 43.

more importantly, they are doing the will of God. By helping members identify their spiritual gifts, there would be more participation in ministries that benefit people.

The project does not promote extreme religiosity nor does it promote apathetic lethargy. The project's intent is for ordinary Christians to discover their spiritual gifts of grace and to use them in service to others. Gene Edward Veith, Jr. calls this school of thought the doctrine of vocation where in "God has chosen to work through human beings, who, in their different capacities and according to their different talents, serve each other."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., (2002-03-22). *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Kindle Locations 95-97). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework to equip the membership of Murph Chapel-Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church for works of service. It is comprised of three foundational sections, historical, biblical, and theological. What follows is an in depth discourse on how the three foundations formulate into the theory of a shared-partnership ministry model used to empower the people of God for service.

Historical Foundation

Richard Allen is the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), as recorded; the church was organized out of struggle. “As the number of St. George’s Methodist Church colored congregants grew, their seats were moved to the gallery and placed around the wall in 1787:

[O]n Sabbath morning we went to church and the sexton stood at the door, and told us to go in the gallery. He told us to go, and we would see where to sit. We expected to take the seats over the ones we formerly occupied below, not knowing any better. We took those seats. Meeting had begun, and they were nearly done singing, and just as we got to the seats, the elder said, "let us pray." We had not been long upon our knees before I heard considerable scuffling and low talking. I raised my head up and saw one of the trustees, H-- M--, having hold of the Rev. Absalom Jones, pulling him up off of his knees, and saying, "You must get up--you must not kneel here." Mr. Jones replied, "Wait until prayer is over." Mr. H-- M-- said "no, you must get up now, or I will call for aid and I will force you away." Mr. Jones said, "Wait until prayer is over, and I will get up and trouble you no more." With that he beckoned to one of the other trustees, Mr. L-- S-- to come to his assistance. He came, and went to William White to pull him up. By this time prayer was over, and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church."¹

The group of African worshippers felt they were racially discriminated against and left the church. They knew that racism and discrimination was not acceptable.

This event led Absalom Jones to consciously say, "I will get up and trouble you no more" and Richard Allen and the other African worshippers to subconsciously say, "That's all I can stand. I can't take no more."² It was what Bill Hybels calls their holy discontent moment, "the powerful, spiritual congruence that connected [their] priorities to the priorities of God."³ It was the energy that propelled them out of St. George's Methodist Church into their God-ordained destiny. Many church historians declare this incident as "the origin of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC)."⁴

Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, and other free Africans formed the Free African Society in 1787 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This first mutual aid society organized by

¹ Richard Allen, *Autobiography: The Life Experiences and Gospel Labours of the Right Reverend Richard Allen*, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/allen/allen.html>, 13.

² Bill Hybels, *Holy Discontent: Fueling the Fire That Ignites Personal Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 22.

³ Hybels, 25.

⁴ Richard Allen, *Autobiography: The Life Experiences and Gospel Labours of the Right Reverend Richard Allen*, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/allen/allen.html>.

people of African descent was designed to provide socioeconomic guidance to newly freed African people. Allen and Jones, two ministers, “founded the first quasi-financial organization in Philadelphia.” They sought to teach its members “thrift and saving to build wealth in the community.”⁵ “From the very beginning, the objective seemed to have been twofold: First, to provide a center of worship, in which any person, regardless of color, could enjoy the worship of God with freedom from restriction and segregation; and second, to give better guidance to their people and to aid the less fortunate.”⁶ “Allen and Jones recognized that the growth of Philadelphia’s free black community required a new brand of black leadership, one centered in diverse community groups and multiple leadership figures rather than a single man. Here what seemed to be division became strength. Allen eventually broke from Jones and the FAS to form the AME Church. It is the only denomination to develop from the sociological needs of its members.”⁷ Allen realized he could still work with Jones on the broader cause of racial justice.”⁸

From its inception, the AME Church’s ultimate purposes were to make available God’s biblical principles, spread Christ’s liberating gospel, and to provide continuing programs to enhance the entire social development of all people.⁹ The vision statement of the AME Church encourages involvement of all members both clergy and laity: “At

⁵ Free African Society, 1778, accessed January 12, 2013, <http://www.fedpartnership.gov/minority-banking-timeline/free-african-society.cfm>.

⁶ Richard Allen, *Autobiography*.

⁷ Femi Lewis, AME Church, accessed January 22, 2013, <http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/africanamericanhistory/a/AMEChurch.htm>.

⁸ Richard S. Newman, *Freedom’s Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York, NY: University Press, 2008, Kindle Edition), 2413.

⁹ African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church – 2012* (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2013), 13.

every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost, and to serve the needy. It is also the duty of the Church to continue to encourage all members to become involved in all aspects of church training.”¹⁰ The component of the AME Church’s mission statement promotes partnership where ordained clergy preach the gospel of Christ, and lay members administer the social ministries.

All members of the AME Church, youth and young adults included, are encouraged to “use their God-given gifts and talents for Kingdom building.”¹¹ The Women’s Missionary Society is to provide training and education that develops and inspires responsible visionary leadership motivated to witness and advocate for the global mission community; and to advocate for peace, justice, and human rights for women, children, elderly, and families.¹² John Wesley referred to these acts as means of grace, methods God uses to bestow grace on humanity.¹³

Robeck reports that in 1906 the First African Methodist Episcopal Church was one of the primary African American churches, where half of the African American population attended.¹⁴ First AME Church was founded by Bridget “Biddy” Mason, who was born a slave in Mississippi on August 15, 1818. She arrived in San Bernardino

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 413.

¹² Ibid., 297.

¹³ John Wesley, *Sermons, on Several Occasions* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1999).

¹⁴ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), 56.

County, California, in 1851, as a slave to Robert M. Smith. "California, being a free state, Mason and her daughters petitioned the court for their freedom, which was granted in 1856."¹⁵ "Biddy" became one of the first African American women to own land in Los Angeles. Her first land purchase was a site on Spring Street for \$250. She was the first woman founder of an AME Church. She and her son-in-law started the First AME Church in Los Angeles, also known as FAME Church, Los Angeles. She gave generously to the poor of all races by providing food and shelter.

First AME Church, the largest AME Church in southern California, continues the legacy of service established by the Free African Society, Richard Allen, and Biddy Mason. The church's motto is "First to serve," and they live up to this motto through their social, economic development, educational, and spiritual programs and services available to the public.

Other AME congregations that have followed suit are Greater Allen A.M.E. Cathedral of New York; Saint Philip African Methodist Episcopal Church in Atlanta, GA, and Allen Chapel AME Church, Fort Worth, Texas. The aforementioned AME churches might be categorized as megachurches if any of the congregations sustain an average weekly attendance of 2,000 persons or more in their worship services.¹⁶

Regardless of size in membership, all AME Church congregations are called to service. Those AME congregations that do not have programs that support the community must return to their historical roots. Clergy and laity must form partnerships

¹⁵ Albert Greenstein, Contributing author on the article Historical Society of Southern California "Bridget "Biddy" Mason," accessed June 15, 2012, <http://socalhistory.org/biographies/bridget-biddy-mason.html>.

¹⁶ Hartford Institute for Religious Research, "Megachurch Definition," accessed September 3, 2014, <http://hirr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/definition.html>.

grounded in worship to God and service to humanity using their gifts of grace as defined in Ephesians 4:7, which is discussed in the next section, Biblical Foundations.

Biblical Foundations

Jesus' mission extended through his disciples—his partners in ministry. He empowered them to exercise their spiritual gifts in ministry when he sent the group of twelve men to preach and gave them authority to heal and to exorcize in Mark 6:7-13. “Mark referred to the twelve disciples as ‘apostles’ on their successful return from a mission of preaching and healing. From this preliminary training they returned ‘apostles’ indeed.”¹⁷ Therefore, the word apostle (Greek *apostellō*) seems frequently to be defined as, to send with a particular purpose.¹⁸ Jesus sent the disciples into the world to carry out the will of God through acts of service, and they returned apostles. “The church as a sent people”¹⁹, filled with modern-day disciples of Jesus Christ, is therefore being sent into the world to perform God’s works of service.

The church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). The role of apostles was to pray and to serve the word of God. Regarding the issue of daily distribution of food to the widows, their community was instructed to select from among them seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, to appoint to

¹⁷ D. R. W. Wood & I. H. Marshall, “Apostle,” *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 58.

¹⁸ D. R. W. Wood & I. H. Marshall, 58.

¹⁹ Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 4.

this task because their widows were being overlooked in the daily ministration.²⁰

Ministration is defined as “the services of a minister of religion or of a religious institution.”²¹ The seven men selected to wait tables were not the apostles. Their ministry was distinct from the ‘ministry of the word’.²² Their task was diakonia—service to the widows. This clearly demonstrates a shared ministry model among the apostles and those called to care for the widows. It also reveals “the early church’s concern was not only about a spiritual ministry (word of God and prayer) but also about a material ministry.”²³

Paul called himself an apostle because the risen Christ commissioned him.²⁴ He practiced a shared-ministry model by partnering in ministry with Barnabas in Antioch. “From the time of his earliest team relationship as associate to Barnabas (Acts 11:19–26) at Antioch, Paul practiced and taught an equipping ministry. Paul saw the essential wisdom of a shared ministry.”²⁵ Paul’s admonition to the leaders of the Gentile Christian congregations, particularly those in Ephesus, was that they were charged with equipping the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11). The Ephesians 4:11 scripture is the basis of this project to support the idea of a shared ministry model.

²⁰ R. Young, “Acts 6:1,” in *Young’s Literal Translation* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997).

²¹ C. Soanes & A. Stevenson, “Ministration” in *Concise Oxford English dictionary* 11th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²² T. E. Page, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1897), 116–117.

²³ Kenneth L. Baker, (General Editor) and John H. Stek, Mark L. Strauss, Ronald F. Youngblood (Associate Editors), “Acts,” in *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 1687.

²⁴ M. H. Manser, *Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies* (London, England: Martin Manser, 1999).

²⁵ C. Tidwell, *Church Administration: Effective Leadership for Ministry* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1985), 43–55.

Ephesians

The authorship of the Book of Ephesians is debatable. According to Wilson, the traditional belief “by the earliest Apostolic Fathers – Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas, and Polycarp”—viewed the apostle Paul as its author.²⁶ The letter contains autobiographical information where Paul identifies himself as the author: “I Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God...” (Ephesians 1:1).

The real issue debated by scholars is to whom the letter was intended. Many versions of this letter were discovered. The phrase “in Ephesus,” is missing in some earlier Greek manuscripts. Clinton Arnold and Harold Hoehner claim that the majority of the manuscripts that include the words ‘in Ephesus’ represent the original reading, and that Paul intended his letter to be sent as a circular to the region of Ephesus.

This thesis supports the view that the letter to the Ephesians was a general epistle sent to mainly Gentile believers in southwestern Asia Minor, and that it was linked with Ephesus at an early stage, perhaps because of its being a strategic church or because it was one of the several cities to which the letter was sent.²⁷

Paul wrote this letter to expand the horizons of his readers so that they would understand better the dimensions of God’s eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God had provided for the church.²⁸ Chapters 4 through 6 offer five practical ways to fulfill God’s purpose in the church. (See Table 3.1).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ P. T. O’Brien, “The letter to the Ephesians,” in *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 86-87.

²⁸ Kenneth L. Baker, (General Editor) and John H. Stek, Mark L. Strauss, Ronald F. Youngblood (Associate Editors), “Ephesians Introduction,” in *Zondervan NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 1823.

Table 3.1. Topics in Ephesians 4:1 – 6:20

Topic	Scripture Reference
Unity	4:1 – 6
Maturity	4:7 – 16
Renewal of Personal Life	4:17 – 5:20
Deference in Personal Relationships	5:21 – 6:9
Strength in the Spiritual Conflict	6:10 – 20

Source: Zondervan NIV Study Bible²⁹

The underpinning biblical foundational scriptures for this thesis are Ephesians 4:11-13, supported by Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, 1 Corinthians 7, 13 – 14, Ephesians 3, and 1 Peter 4 used to identify gifts of grace.

In Ephesians 4:11, the five gifts of grace and their purposes are that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13). The apostles and prophets were part of the foundation of the church and teaching was associated with the pastoral office.³⁰ These persons provided the church with the teaching of Christ for the edification of the body (v. 12) and for the avoidance of false teaching (v. 14). They enable others to exercise their own respective ministries so that the body is built to maturity, wholeness, and unity.³¹ The purpose of these charismatic gifts is primarily the edification of the whole church, and, secondarily, the conviction and

²⁹ Ibid., 1824.

³⁰ Kenneth L. Baker, (General Editor) and John H. Stek, Mark L. Strauss, Ronald F. Youngblood (Associate Editors), “Ephesians,” *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 1687.

³¹ P. T. O’Brien, *The letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 298.

conversion of unbelievers.³² Christ gave gifts to his people (Ephesians 4:8). The concluding section, Theological Foundation, examines the gifts of grace imparted to the body of Christ by Holy Spirit.

Theological Foundation

This section begins with an explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is the doctrinal foundation of the AME Church. The discussion topic then shift to pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. The concluding section reveals the works of the Holy Spirit—he gives spiritual gifts to persons.³³

Trinity

The fundamental belief of the Christian faith is the doctrine of the Trinity, that is, one God in three persons: “There is one God. There are three distinct persons who are God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”³⁴ Torrey states, “They are three separate personalities, having mutual relations to one another, acting upon one another, speaking of or to one another, applying the pronouns of the second and third persons to one another.”³⁵ Each person of the Godhead coexists and has certain functions to help identify

³² D. R. W Wood & I. H. Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* (3rd ed.) (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 1130.

³³ C. Ryrie, *Ryrie's Practical Guide to Communicating Bible Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005).

³⁴ N. L. Geisler, *Baker encyclopedia of Christian apologetics*, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 730.

³⁵ R. A. Torrey, *The person and work of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures and in personal experience* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), 35.

them. “For example, the Father planned salvation; the Son accomplished it on the cross and at the resurrection, and the Holy Spirit applies it to the lives of the believers. The Son submits to the Father, and the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son.”³⁶ According to Thomas and Wondra the Father is “the ultimate origin and content of the revelation, the Son is to reveal the Father, and the Spirit is to bear witness to the revelation of the Father in the Son.”³⁷

The doctrine of the Trinity is expanded when viewed through the lens of the missional church. “The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another movement: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world” to perform works of service.³⁸

The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church is devoted to the Trinitarian God and humanity as declared in its motto: “God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, the Holy Spirit our Comforter, Humankind our Family.”³⁹ According to Dr. Vickers, the Holy Spirit works in and through the church to incorporate us into the Trinitarian life of God.⁴⁰ In the Articles of Religion in the Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2012, Article 1, Of Faith in the Holy Trinity states, “There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, “Trinity,” in *Introduction to Theology* (3rd Edition) (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 69.

³⁸ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (20th Anniversary Edition), (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 399.

³⁹ African Methodist Episcopal Church. *The Doctrine and Discipline*, 588.

⁴⁰ Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 23.

goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity in this God-head, there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”⁴¹

The Holy Spirit is God and Jesus’ gift to believers. According to Jason Vickers, “We must remind ourselves that it is ultimately the Holy Trinity, and not the church per se, who has a mission. The church is simply blessed to be part of the Holy Trinity’s mission in and to the world.”⁴² To demonstrate Murph Chapel-Saint Paul AME Church’s belief in and commitment to serve the Trinitarian God, they developed and adopted a three-fold mission statement: “Our mission is to go deeper in God’s Word and our worship to God, wider in our witness of Jesus Christ, and higher in the work of the Holy Spirit.”⁴³

Pneumatology

Pneumatology is the theological concept used to describe the study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Thomas and Wondra write:

The development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit includes Athanasius’s argument for the consubstantiality of the Spirit; the elaboration by the Cappadocians, who taught that the Spirit proceeds out of the Father through the Son; the affirmation of the full deity of the Spirit at the Council of Constantinople in 381; and Augustine’s teaching on the Spirit as the union between the Father and the Son and on the double procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son (*filioque*).⁴⁴

⁴¹ African Methodist Episcopal Church. *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church – 2012* (Nashville, TX: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2011), 16-17.

⁴² Vickers, 50.

⁴³ This is the mission statement of Murph Chapel-Saint Paul AME Church in Valinda, CA developed in 2012.

⁴⁴ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, “Holy Spirit and Sanctification,” in *Introduction to Theology* (3rd Edition) (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 221.

The Western Church accepts the full deity of the Holy Spirit as purported by Athanasius, the Cappadocians, at the Council of Constantinople in 381, and Augustine. “The Holy Spirit has a differentiated personality from the Father and the Son.”⁴⁵ The Holy Spirit (also referred to as the Holy Ghost by the AME Church) is the third person in the Godhead. “The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.”⁴⁶ He is subordinated to the Father and to the Son.

R. A. Torrey identifies at least twenty-five different names used in the Old and New Testaments in speaking of the Holy Spirit that reveals “the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. (See Table 3.2).”⁴⁷

Table 3.2. R. A. Torrey’s 25 Names of the Holy Spirit in Old and New Testaments

1. The Spirit (Breath or Wind)	6. The Spirit of Christ	11. The Holy Spirit of Promise	16. The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding	21. The Spirit of Grace
2. The Spirit of God	7. The Spirit of Jesus Christ	12. The Spirit of Holiness	17. The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding	22. The Spirit of Grace and of Supplication
3. The Spirit of Jehovah	8. The Spirit of Jesus	13. The Spirit of Judgment	18. The Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord	23. The Spirit of Glory
4. The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah	9. The Spirit of His Son	14. The Spirit of Burning	19. The Spirit of Life	24. The Eternal Spirit
5. The Spirit of the Living God.	10. The Holy Spirit	15. The Spirit of Truth	20. The Oil of Gladness	25. The Comforter

⁴⁵ Geisler, 731.

⁴⁶ African Methodist Episcopal Church, *The Doctrine and Discipline*, 14.

⁴⁷ Torrey, 39.

According to Thomas and Wondra, “In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God as the personal presence and power of God is understood to cooperate in the work of creation; to guide rulers, especially the messianic king; to inspire the prophets; to be manifest in a widespread manner in the messianic age; and to sanctify Israel.”⁴⁸

“In [New Testament] Scripture, the Holy Spirit is referred to as ‘him.’ He does things only persons can do, such as teach, convict of sin, and be grieved by sin. The Holy Spirit has intellect, will, and feeling.”⁴⁹ “He is in the world (omnipresence), and He is in the believer (indwelling).”⁵⁰

The Pentecost narrative found in Acts 2 is one of the most referenced New Testament passages of scripture associated with the origin of the Holy Spirit in the early church. At Pentecost, “the Holy Spirit is given to the community of the church.”⁵¹ Many believers think that the Pentecost experience was the introduction of the Holy Spirit. However, according to Max Turner, “the early disciples already had the fundamentals of a theology of the Spirit from their Jewish understanding of the Old Testament, and this understanding would have been extended by the ‘revival’ of the Spirit in the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus.”⁵² The fact is the Holy Spirit was present in the Old Testament, during John the Baptist’s ministry, during Jesus’ ministry, on the Day of Pentecost, during Paul’s ministry, in the early church history, and He is also present

⁴⁸ Thomas and Wondra, 219.

⁴⁹ Geisler, 731.

⁵⁰ C. Ryrie, *Ryrie's Practical Guide to Communicating Bible Doctrine* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 25.

⁵¹ Thomas and Wondra, 220.

⁵² Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*, 3.

today. “The Spirit is the way the risen Christ is present in the church and its members. Christ dwells in the individual Christian and in the community, through the Spirit, to assist in their prayers and to produce the fruit of the Spirit, especially love... Thus, the Christian life is a life in Christ as well as in the Body of Christ.”⁵³

It is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit who animates and empowers the church (believers in Jesus Christ). He “works in and through the church to bring us into communion with God the Father through Jesus Christ, the eternally begotten Son.”⁵⁴ The Holy Spirit is the “Person of sovereign majesty, who uses us according to His will.”⁵⁵ He is the “Divine Person, One who never errs, who is willing to take possession of us and impart to us such gifts as He sees best and to use us according to His wise and loving will.”⁵⁶ “Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly...” (Romans 12:6).

God’s Gift of Grace

God’s gift to the world is grace – “God’s unmerited, unconditional love and acceptance freely given to all.”⁵⁷ Steven Manskar explains grace as “the love of God, incarnated in Jesus Christ, and activated in the Holy Spirit, given to draw the world to

⁵³ Thomas and Wondra, 220.

⁵⁴ Vickers, 47-48.

⁵⁵ Torrey, 10.

⁵⁶ Torrey, 10.

⁵⁷ Steven W. Manskar, “Opening Ourselves to Grace: The Basics of Christian Discipleship,” *The Journal of Christian Education*, Volume 74, Fall 2012, Number 3 (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union), 9.

God.”⁵⁸ According to Manskar, “As we [a congregation of believers in Jesus Christ] live this life, we become channels of grace for the world.”⁵⁹ All who receives God’s grace are responsible “for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13).

The Holy Spirit’s Gifts of Grace (Spiritual Gifts)

At the core of this project is the term gifts of grace that is often connected with spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1; 14:1). These two terms are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. The Greek word charisma (the plural is charismata) is found in connection with the listings of spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:4, and 1 Peter 4:10.⁶⁰ “Charisma comes from the root word charis, which in Greek means grace. A close relationship exists, then, between spiritual gifts and the grace of God.”⁶¹ Spiritual gifts are gifts of grace endowed to believers by the Holy Spirit of God. They are essential in the life of the church.

The Christian church congregation is a unique entity that is spiritually motivated. Its identity is worship and its purpose is works of service. The Holy Spirit equips the members both clergy and laity with gifts of grace for the edification of people and the glorification of God. God calls the congregation to works of service, that is, to seek and

⁵⁸ Manskar, 8.

⁵⁹ Manskar, 7.

⁶⁰ A. B. Luter, “Grace,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, J. D. Barry & L. Wentz, eds. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2012).

⁶¹ Wagner, 34.

save the lost and to serve the needs of people. “Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (1 Peter 2:10). God calls the clergy to prepare the people for the works of service and every act of service must be performed out of love. Effective ministry is motivated by love, because God is love. Gifts of grace are for the body of Christ—the church to build up the church.

When spiritual gifts are actively functioning in the local church congregation, God’s grace abounds, human lives are affected, and God is glorified. The resulting renewal is the people of God are empowered to exercise their God-given spiritual gifts in local congregations to bring about unity, harmony, and change in the world. The change happens when spiritual gifts are transformed into models of ministries to serve the needs of people, thus making the congregation significant in the community-at-large; and more importantly, the congregation is doing the will of God.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology used to stimulate creative conversation concerning the use of spiritual gifts to address the needs of others. The ministry model, case study, was conducted at Murph Chapel-Saint Paul (MC-SP) African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Valinda, California. The chapter begins with the hypothesis, which contains a description of the problem statement and proposed solutions, followed by the research design and project timeline. It concludes with the applied methodology used in the project. The project results are discussed in Chapter 5, Field Experience.

Hypothesis

The congregation of Murph Chapel-Saint Paul AME Church has struggled to envision new ministries that meet the needs of the community. Although many members recognize the need for new ministries, they lack inspiration and creativity to start them. Oftentimes they look to the pastor to generate fresh ideas. This project seeks to re-energize MC-SP AME Church with the spirit of the Free African Society by: (1) teaching and preaching about spiritual gifts granted to every believing member by the Holy Spirit for ministry resulting in identification and application of the spiritual gifts of grace;

(2) discovering the social needs of the people in the communities surrounding the church; and (3) encouraging creative conversations among church congregants on the subject of the development of community-focused ministries using their God-given spiritual gifts. When believers know their spiritual gifts, that is, works of service that God through the Holy Spirit has equipped them to perform in the Body of Christ, they desire to use their spiritual gifts to help others, and local church leadership encourage them to use their spiritual gifts to minister to others, they will devise ways and means to put their spiritual gifts into practice. This is the process to unleash transformational creativity in the Body of Christ resulting in works of service that fulfill the needs of others. This is ministry!

Research Design

Throughout the earlier months of 2013, the Murph Chapel-Saint Paul (MC-SP) African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church congregation was exposed to the subject of the spiritual gifts of grace. Sermons and Bible study lessons on the spiritual gifts were preached and taught to the members of the congregation. Twenty-six adult members, including the pastor, completed the Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire.¹ These persons represented a sample population of the congregation. The intent of these activities was an initial introduction of spiritual gifts of grace to the congregation in order for them to gain relevant factual knowledge about spiritual gifts of grace granted by the Holy Spirit.

An invitation to participate in the eight-week project was extended to the church's laity and clergy membership. A subset of members and clergy from the church, called the

¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Finding Your Spiritual Gifts: The Easy to Use, Self-Guided Questionnaire*, (Ventura: CA, Gospel Light, 2012).

Context Associates (CA), participated in eight weekly meetings commencing on Monday, February 3, 2014 and culminating on Monday, March 24, 2014, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. They were required to affirm their commitment to attend and fully participate in all CA meetings by signing a Context Associates Certification form (Appendix A). The project timeline shown below details the weekly meeting agendas.

Project Timeline

Teaching on Spiritual Gifts (Gifts of Grace)

- Pentecost Sunday, May 15, 2013
- Bible Studies (June 2013, no Bible Studies in July 2013, August 2013, and September 2013)

Spiritual Gifts Assessments

- 1st Assessment: Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2013
- 2nd Assessment: Church Conference, Sunday, August 11, 2013
- 3rd Assessment: Church Conference, Sunday, September 22, 2013

Context Associates Meeting Dates and Agenda Topics

Week 1: Organize Meeting, February 3, 2014

- Share Project Scope with Context Associates
- Discuss the Project Problem, Hypothesis, and Research Design
- Get signed Context Associates Commitment form from each Context Associate
- Plan Community Fellowship Meal, February 23, 2014

Week 2: Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire Step 4 Data Analysis, February 10, 2014

- Share Questionnaires results

- Analyze Questionnaires step 4 results
- Identify Gift Combinations (CA and church)
- Brainstorm Potential Ministries

Week 3: Community Survey, February 17, 2014

- Final Plan for Community Fellowship Meal
- Design Community Survey Questions
- Conduct Community Survey at Community Fellowship Meal, February 23, 2014

Week 4: Review Community Survey Results, February 24, 2014

- Review Community Survey Data
- Analyze Community Survey Data
- Discuss Listening Prayer Process

Week 5: Listening Prayers, March 3, 2014

- Discuss Listening Prayer Process
- Pray about community needs from March 4 – 9, 2014
- Journal responses

Week 6: Brainstorm Community-Focus Ministries, March 10, 2014

- Review Prayer Responses
- Review Wagner-Modified Houts Brainstorming Ministries
- Review Community Survey
- Analysis and Synthesize data for Triangulation
- Brainstorm possible community-focused ministries
- Propose at least two new ministries

Week 7: Share Ministry Model Outcomes, March 17, 2014

- Share Ministry Model outcomes with congregation
- Invite others to join the dialogue

Week 8: Evaluation & Celebration, March 24, 2014

Applied Methodology

This qualitative research project used a case study approach. The case study provided a narrative description of what occurred during the execution of the project. It narratively describes the applied processes to arouse the imagination and creativity of the CA within the context of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church. This case study “enables the researcher to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ type questions, while taking into consideration how a phenomenon is influenced by the context within which it is situated,”² that is, it inquired as to why the MC – SP AME Church congregation has so few social ministries. It attempted to determine if the reasons for the lack of ministries are because congregants are (1) unfamiliar with their inner spiritual gifts to be used to fulfill the needs of others, (2) unaware of community needs, and (3) repressed by local church leadership, therefore unable to use their God-given gifts. It presupposed that when congregants know their spiritual gifts and the needs of others and are encouraged to use their spiritual gifts, they will begin to engage in creative conversation about how to meet the needs of others.

² Pamela Baxter and Susan Jack, “Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers,” *The Qualitative Report* 13, no. 4 [December 2008]: 544-559, accessed May 7, 2014, <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf>.

The philosophical worldview³ of the project design is advocacy/participatory, which “contains an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher’s life,”⁴ and the participants are empowered to engage in the entire process. Similar “the pro-active research method intentionally engages in qualitative research while pro-actively working towards transformation...and the researcher is passionately involved with the practice being evaluated,”⁵ In this project, participants were empowered to “help design questions, collect data, and analyze information,” the researcher acted as an observer, facilitator, and participant.⁶

Research Tools/Instrumentations

The project employed three data collection instruments or protocols. It used both quantitative tools, that is, questionnaire and survey, and qualitative tools, namely, focused group discussions, participants’ comments, field notes, and observations as means to gather data. Qualitative researchers “do not tend to use or rely on questionnaires or instruments developed by other researchers.”⁷ Nevertheless, this qualitative research project used a mixed model of qualitative and quantitative tools, namely, (1) Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire, (2) Community Survey, (3) Focused Group

³ John Creswell W., *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 5.

⁴ Ibid., 9.

⁵ William R. Myer, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program*, (3rd edition) (Chicago, IL: Exploration Press, 2002), 25.

⁶ Creswell, 9.

⁷ Creswell, 175.

Discussions/Participants' Comments, and (4) Field Notes/Observations as sources of data collection.

The Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire was used to determine the individual spiritual gifts and collective gift-mix combination of the congregation. This four-step questionnaire “consists of (1) honestly answering 135 statements, (2) scoring the responses on the basis of past experiences, (3) studying the gift definitions and scripture references, and (4) evaluating where your gifts may lie and exploring the implications for ministry in the Body of Christ.”⁸ This data collection tool was used to validate objective one, that is, to demonstrate that every believing member of the Body of Christ is equipped with at least one spiritual gift of grace granted to by the Holy Spirit to be used in the local church congregation.

Each respondent answered the 135 statements based on experience found in step one of the questionnaire. Completing this step involved the cognitive process of recall that “involves retrieving relevant knowledge from long-term memory when given a prompt to do so.”⁹ In step two of the questionnaire, the Wagner-Modified Houts Scoring Sheet, a numerical score ranging from zero to fifteen, determined the gift score in each of the twenty-seven spiritual gifts identified on the questionnaire. An alphabet ranging from A to AA was assigned to a corresponding spiritual gift on the scoring sheet. The numerical scores in each spiritual gift category were tallied and place next to the corresponding spiritual gift alphabet. The highest scores determined the areas of spiritual giftedness, that is to say, the dominant “three highest-rated gifts” and the subordinate

⁸ Wagner, *Questionnaire*, 3.

⁹ Anderson, 69.

“next three highest-scoring gifts.”¹⁰ These areas of spiritual giftedness represented the gift-mix combination of the congregation, that is, the works of service God has equipped this group of people to perform. Once the gift-mix combination of the congregation was discovered, the CA brainstormed potential ministries based compatible with the spiritual gift-mix combination.

The Community Survey was the data collection tool used as a means to gather information about the community’s perception of its needs and to identify the composition of the surveyed population. A five-question survey (Appendix E), designed by the CAs, captured respondents’ views concerning, (1) community service needs, (2) church involvement in community activities, (3) volunteerism, and (4) demographical information. The analyzed data represented a view of the community’s needs and desired activities. This partially fulfilled objective two, that is, awareness of community needs.

Complete satisfaction of objective two involved elements of knowing the community’s perceived needs and knowing how to fulfill those needs. The latter portion of the solution required active engagement in prayer and meditation and journaling. In week five, using Henri Nouwen book *The Way of the Heart: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*,¹¹ the CAs were instructed to (1) read the prayer chapter in the aforementioned Nouwen book, (2) pray over the Community survey results, and (3) listen for God’s will and instructions to implement new community-focused ministries during their private prayer and meditation time. They were instructed to journal, that is, sit and write about their thoughts and feelings at the conclusion of the prayer and

¹⁰ Wagner, *Questionnaire*.

¹¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publisher, 1981), 69-99.

meditation exercises. The data collected at the conclusion of this exercise would be their comments, that is, what they heard God say regarding meeting the needs of the community. How was God leading them to respond to the community's needs? At the week six meeting, the CAs brainstormed potential community-focused ministries based on the Community Survey results and God's responses received during the prayer and meditation and journaling experience.

The final objective involved moving from factual knowledge of the spiritual gifts to a conceptual knowledge of ministries. It was realized when the CAs participated in excited creative dialogue during the weekly meetings and after their presentation of the project to the larger congregation.

Data Triangulation

Data triangulation, "collaboration from three different sources,"¹² was achieved when common ministries emerged from the data collected during the (1) spiritual gifts ministries brainstorming performed in week two, (2) data results from the Community Survey analyzed during week four, and (3) data from the week six brainstorming session of community-focused ministries. From these data sources emerged a list of common community-focused ministries that were presented to the larger congregation for creative dialogue centered on future implementation.

At the conclusion of the project, week 8, each CA completed the project evaluation consisting of eleven questions. The intent of the project evaluation was to

¹² Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd edition) (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), 299.

ascertain from their perspective if the objectives were met, and to learn from their experience regarding the project implementation and process.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, Field Experience is the case study. It narratively describes the project outcomes.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

This chapter recounts in detail the proceedings of the eight-week case study along with data collection methods used, and the data analysis of the three objectives. The objectives were (1) identification of spiritual gifts of graces, (2) discovery of the community's needs, and (3) engagement in creative conversations about developing community-focused ministries, and ministry model outcomes.

Context Associates (CAs)

Five members of Murph Chapel-Saint Paul (MC-SP) African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church congregation accepted the invitation to serve as the Context Associates (CAs). The five-member group was composed of four lay members and one clergy person. Throughout this project each CA will be referred to as CA member #1 through #5. This all-female group was composed of four African Americans and one Asian America. They met for eight weeks to collaboratively explore potential causes for the lack of community-focused ministries at MC-SP AME Church and to devise strategies to activate the congregation's imagination and creativity to develop new sustainable community-focused ministries. In addition to the CA, one AME pastor volunteered to serve as a consultant observer to the group.

Ministry Model Implementation

The project components included (1) eight weekly CA meetings held on Mondays during the time span of February 3, 2014 through March 24, 2014, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (2) a Community Fellowship Meal (CFM), held on Sunday, February 23, 2014, and (3) a final presentation to the larger congregation conducted on Sunday, March 23, 2014 at 1:00 p.m. The weekly CA meeting agenda consisted of prayer, dinner, and discussions on the topics outlined on the project timeline. At the first meeting, held February 3, 2014, each CA received a copy of the project scope document, which defined the hypothesis, research design, and proposed timeline. After a review and discussion of the project scope document, each CA was asked to complete and sign the Context Associates Certification (Appendix A). This document confirmed their participation in the project. In the weeks that followed, the CA meetings focused on demonstrating the objectives.

Identification of Spiritual Gifts

At the February 10, 2014, CAs meeting, the group reviewed the twenty-six Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaires completed by the church respondents. The spiritual gifts numerical scores from each respondent's scoring sheet were tallied. The summation of the data identified the group's spiritual gift-mix combination. The results yielded the information captured in Table 5.1. The components of twenty-six church respondents' dominant and subordinate spiritual gift-mix combination are (1) giving, (2) service, (3) hospitality, (4) administration, (5) wisdom, (6) exhortation, and (7) faith. The categories of giving and service both received scores of fifteen, hospitality and administration were even at thirteen, and wisdom, exhortation, and faith each collected a

count of ten. The first three gifts, giving, service, and hospitality, are service – based gifts. The remaining four although not explicitly service – based gifts could be integrated into serving the community. The CAs then brainstormed potential ministries compatible with the group's spiritual gifts-mix combination. The outgrowth of the brainstorming session is listed in Table 5.2. It was during the brainstorming session where the CAs identified that every believing member of the Body of Christ is gifted with at least one spiritual gift of grace and they began the process of understanding how to apply them.

Discovery of Community Needs

The Community Fellowship Meal (CFM), formerly known as the Black History Month Soul Food Luncheon, was held on February 23, 2014, from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.. In the past, the luncheon was exclusively reserved for members of MC-SP AME Church and their invited guests. During the planning of the CFM, the CA decided to broaden the guest list by extending an invitation to the West Covina/Valinda community-at-large and the Hispanic congregation that conducts worship services at MC-SP AME Church. This generated an opportunity for fellowship and increase the understanding of the community's needs from a diverse audience.

The CFM's project plan was comprised of three major components: advertisement; (2) food; and, (3) a survey. The advertisement strategy included announcements in the church's bulletin; a banner (Appendix C) installed on the exterior of the church building, and door hanger flyers (Appendix B). CA member #4 volunteered to design the door hanger flyer that included a picture of the church and other pertinent information. CA member #3 volunteered to research the City of West Covina and Los

Angeles County's solicitation ordinances and she obtained the necessary permits. CA member #5 designed the exterior banner.

Table 5.1. Spiritual Gift Mix Combination of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church (Total N=26)

Spiritual Gifts (SG) Category	N	%
Giving. The gift of giving is the special ability that God gives certain members of the Body of Christ to contribute their material resources to the work of the Lord liberally and cheerfully, above and beyond the tithes and offerings expected of all believers.	15	57
Service. The gift of service – sometimes called the gift of volunteer – is the special ability that God gives certain members of the Body of Christ to identify the unmet needs involved in a task related to God's work, and to make use of available resources to meet those needs and help accomplish the desired results.	15	57
Hospitality. The gift of hospitality is the special ability that God gives certain members of the Body of Christ to provide an open door and a warm welcome to those in need of food and lodging.	13	50
Administration. The gift of administration is the special ability that God gives certain members of the Body of Christ to understand clearly the immediate and long-range goals of a particular unit of the Body of Christ and to devise and execute effective plans for the accomplishment of those goals.	13	50
Wisdom. The gift of wisdom is the special ability that God gives certain members of the Body of Christ to know the mind of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to receive insight into how given knowledge may best be applied to specific needs arising in the Body of Christ.	10	38
Exhortation. The gift of exhortation – sometimes called the gift of counseling – is the special ability that God gives certain members of the Body of Christ to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement and counsel to other members of the Body in such a way that they feel helped and healed.	10	38
Faith. The gift of faith is the special ability that God gives certain members of the Body of Christ to discern with extraordinary confidence the will and purposes of God for His work.	10	38

Source: "Finding Your Spiritual Gifts: The Easy to Use, Self-Guided Questionnaire."

Table 5.2. Spiritual Gift Mix Combination Potential Ministries

Food bank/soup kitchen
Free clothing giveaway
Job referrals/job preparation
Counseling services
College preparation
Housing referrals
Rites of passage (girls and boys)
Stewardship program
Economic development
Health fairs

The CAs continued to discuss the plans for the CFM that included the distribution method of the door hanger flyer. All CAs, along with some youth from the church, agreed to be available to canvas the neighborhood after the Sunday, February 16, 2014, morning worship. The group walked a square mile block of the neighborhood northwest of the church and hung over 200 door hanger flyers.

At the third meeting on held February 17, 2014, the CAs made the final plans for the upcoming CFM. The banner arrived that evening and was installed on the exterior of the church on the following day. The church's food committee partnered with the CAs to plan the CFM menu, which consisted of barbequed chicken, beef, and ribs, potato salad, cold slaw, bread, cakes, cookies, and pies, and an assortment of beverages. Additionally, the CA reviewed and revised the five-question survey (Appendix E). The goal was to receive 150 responses from the invited community guests, members of the Hispanic congregation, friends and congregants of MC-SP AME Church.

On the following Sunday, February 23, 2014, the Community Fellowship Meal (CFM) was held outdoors on the church's parking lot. On that morning, prior to worship, the committee arrived to set up the tables, chairs, umbrellas, and decorations. The

weather was favorable as it was a bright sunny day in the mid-80 degrees. After worship, everyone gathered outdoors and lined up to receive a survey (Appendix E) and a pencil. Each survey participant received a CFM ticket (Appendix D) in exchange for a completed survey.

On the next day, February 24, 2014, at the fourth meeting, the CAs tallied and synthesized the Community Survey data to ascertain the members' and community's perception of its needs and to reflect over the entire process and the event. Sixty-four persons attended the CFM, including a council member from the City of West Covina, fifteen persons from the neighborhood, and the remaining forty-eight persons were church members along with their invited guests. The Community Survey results revealed community needs for tutoring and food, and church sponsorship of youth activities, particularly sports. (See Table 5.3 for survey data). Prior to translating this information into potential community services, the CA's next undertaking was to enter into listening prayer, that is, to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Table 5.3. Community Survey Q#1 and Q#2 Results

Survey Q#1: What community services do you need?			Survey Q#2: What community activities would you like the church to sponsor?		
Service	Responses	%	Activity	Responses	%
Tutoring/GED	12	19	Youth Activities	11	17
Food	11	17	Sports	9	14
Clothing	10	16	Tutoring	4	6
Resume Writing	7	11	Food Programs	3	5
Financial Assistance	7	11	Music	3	5
Health insurance	7	11	Homeless Programs	3	5
Language Interpretation	5	8			

Listening Prayers

The CAs commenced its study on prayer and meditation during the latter part of the February 24, 2014 meeting. They used Henri Nouwen's book, *The Way of the Heart: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*¹ and followed the introductory teachings on solitude, silence, and prayer. Each CA was asked to complete the undertakings for the week, to pray and meditate about the needs of the West Covina/Valinda communities and to be prepared to share their recorded notes at the next meeting. The discussion then shifted to how to hear God's voice.

Since the goal of the prayer time exercise was to hear and listen for God's will and directions, most of the CAs revealed an uncertainty of how to recognize God's voice, for they could not assuredly say they had ever heard it. Their concerns initiated a conversation on means by which God speaks. Through this session, they became aware that God speaks in various ways. One person concluded that God speaks when we say, something told me, and that something is God. Others came to the realization that God speaks in an audible voice/sound, a feeling or intuition, in visions and dreams, through the written scripture, and through nature. The prayer conversation reminded the consultant observer of Richard Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. This inspired the researcher to review the book to determine if it contained information that could assist the CAs in their quest to understand how to hear God's voice.

When the CAs reconvened the following week, March 3, 2014, it was discovered that according to the project timeline, the listening prayer exercise was scheduled to

¹ Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publisher, 1981), 69-99.

begin that week instead of the previous week on February 24, 2014. The CAs reported experiencing extreme difficulty with the listening prayer exercise. The following list of obstacles was reported as causes for their struggles: distractions, unusual occurrences / interruptions, fatigue, and lack of focus. The group then discussed possible solutions to overcome the intrusive obstacles to, embrace the distraction by owning and releasing it, adjust the prayer time, and pray for focus.

After the researcher reviewed Foster's book with the CAs, they received training on the forms of meditation mentioned in the book. According to Foster, "Christians throughout the centuries have spoken of a variety of ways of listening to God."² He proposed several models of meditation. The first is "*meditatio Scripturarum*, the meditation upon Scripture centered on internalizing and personalizing the passage."³ The second model of meditation is centering down, which involved becoming still, to enter into the recreating silence, to allow the fragmentation of our minds to become centered, using the model, palms down, palms up.⁴ Foster argues, "Whatever it is that weighs on your mind or is a concern to you, just say, 'palms down.' Release it...after several moments of surrender, turn your palms up as a symbol of your desire to receive from the Lord...Having centered down spend the remaining moments in complete silence. Do not ask for anything. Allow the Lord to commune with you, to love you."⁵ The third kind is

² Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th Anniversary Edition (San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 29.

³ Ibid., 29.

⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁵ Ibid., 31.

“meditation upon the creation...by discovering God in his creatures.”⁶ Finally, the fourth form of meditation is “meditate upon the events of our time and to seek to perceive their significance.”⁷ The group agreed to consider incorporating one or all of these forms of meditation into their personal prayer time.

Afterwards, the group participated in a prayer exercise using the “palms down, palms up” centering meditation model. In the silence, they discovered a distraction in the room, a ticking wall clock that previously went unnoticed. Yet, during this time of prayer and meditation, it was conspicuously loud. So, the ticking sound of the clock was embraced and became the focal point of meditation, as opposed to a distraction. The embraced sound became the path to solitude.

The Context Associates’ listening prayer exercise coincided with the church’s Annual Lenten Revival. The theme of the three – day Lenten Revival held March 4, 2014 through March 6, 2014, was “Make a Decision to Pray Without Ceasing,” from 1 Thessalonians 5:17. The preaching and the Bible study centered on prayer. The palms down, palms up meditation model was introduced to the congregation.

When the CAs reassembled on Monday, March 10, 2014, the room was filled with an air of excitement. The CAs were anxious to share their personal prayer time experiences, that is, what they heard God say to them, and to share their personal growth testimonials. The results are summarized in Table 5.4.

⁶ Ibid., 31.

⁷ Ibid., 31.

Table 5.4. Context Associates' Personal Prayer Results

CA Member	Personal Prayer Time Experience	Personal Prayer Growth Testimonial
	"I heard God tell me to ..."	
#1	"Pray for your neighbors and to truly have love and show compassion toward them." Matt 22	"This experience increased my prayer life, personal character, changed my attitude about prayer, and now I'm experiencing more inner peace."
#2	"Exercise holy boldness and not fear." Psalm 32	"I'm now taking time to hear God better; I'm praying more for others; I took the opportunity to witness to an atheist teacher. I told her "You are blessed to be a grandmother."
#3	"Becomes a more disciplined Disciple of Christ."	"This was my first time hearing God in an audible voice. I heard him clearly when I lost my keys and the voice told me to 'call your son.'"
#4	"Increase your personal faith by believing Philippians 4:13."	"Tuesday night of the Revival, I was sitting at home and the Holy Spirit told me to 'get up and go to the revival.' I'm glad I did because I felt lifted. I've learned to stop worrying. I now feel covered."
#5	"Study the Scriptures, 2 Timothy 2:15."	"I've learned how to overcome obstacles to prayer by embracing them. I have more confidence that I'm not praying amiss. I'm now asking God who to pray for and what to pray for during the Season of Lent."

The CA who experienced fatigue adjusted her prayer time, which allowed her to be more alert, and the unfocused CA member #5 prayed for focus.

Context Associate member #3 experienced insight when she embraced an interruption. It was in the interruption that she witnessed the movement of God. As she purposely allowed the interruption to occur, she received God's directions. She had never before heard God audibly, however, during her prayer time, she heard God call her name. She recounted that the experience began at the conclusion of the March 3, 2014, meeting when she misplaced her car keys. After an unsuccessful search of the church's sanctuary

and parking lot, she emptied the content of her purse and found the keys lodged between the pages of her address book. A few days later, as she was preparing to leave her home, again, she could not find her car keys. On this occasion, she heard a voice call her name and direct her to call her son at work. Upon speaking to her son, she discovered that he had mistakenly picked up her keys and took them to work with him. She heard the voice of God!

The CAs ascertained from the prayer experience that God's will for Murph Chapel—Saint Paul AME Church as it relates to the community is to (1) pray over the community like Joshua and the people of Israel did when they entered Jericho, (2) learn the community's language and culture, (3) practice compassion as a way of life by offering careful attentive listening, (4) offer and provide spiritual food – love, hope, faith, and prayer, in addition to physical food, and (5) be continuously present in the community.

Community – Focused Ministries Creative Conversations

The next step involved moving from a factual knowledge of the spiritual gifts to a conceptual knowledge of ministries. This process began with brainstorming ideas for community-focused ministries converging from the aggregated survey data in Table 5.3 and the listening prayer responses in Table 5.4 shown above. The resulting ideas for community – focused ministries are listed in Table 5.5 along with the recommended frequencies of occurrence.

Table 5.5. Community – Focused Ministries

Community-Focused Ministry	Frequency of Occurrence
(1) Carnival	Annual
(2) Clothing Drive	Bi-Annual
(3) Shoe Drive	Bi-Annual
(4) Bilingual Job Fair	Bi-Annual
(5) Community Fellowship Meal	Quarter
(6) Food Bank Contributions	Quarter
(7) Donation Bin	Continuous

The question “What makes these community events ministries?” was posed to the group. In other words, “How are church sponsored ministries different from non-sectarian organization events?” After much deliberation, the CAs concluded that ministries involve God-talk and spiritual activities, that is, prayer, scripture, Gospel tracts, Christian/Gospel music, and Bible Trivia Games and Booths, to name a few. An event devoid of these activities is just an event. The recommendation was to ensure that at every Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church sponsored event, meeting, and gathering God is worshipped, the transformative message of the Gospel is shared, guests are invited to form a relationship with Jesus, and, an infilling of the transformational power of the Holy Spirit is offered and encouraged.

At the Monday, March 17, 2014, the CAs drafted the PowerPoint presentation to present to the congregation at the March 23, 2014, church conference meeting. This was the group’s attempt to demonstrate meaningful learning, that is, take their knowledge of spiritual gifts and use it to solve the problem of lack of community-focused ministries at MC-SP AME Church. Each CA volunteered to present one aspect of the presentation, namely, (1) Project Overview, (2) MC – SP Church Spiritual Gifts (SG) Mix, (3) MC –

SP Church Spiritual Gifts (SG) Mix Potential Ministries, (4) Community Survey Results, (5) Context Associates (CA) Listening Prayer (LP), (6) Community Needs, and (7) Vision of Potential Community-Focused Ministries. The CAs were asked to become familiar with the content of their slides and not read them verbatim but to speak to the congregation from their personal experience.

On the following Sunday, March 23, 2014, seventeen persons including the CA attended the Church Conference meeting. At the conclusion of the presentation, the members of the congregation were invited to make comments. What happened during the discussion was amazing. An unpredictable transformation occurred! New energy entered the room. One person cried and expressed how she felt cheated. It was as if she had missed out on something important. She wished she had participated. Another said she gained new insight about hearing God's voice. For the past few months, a chirping bird awakened her every morning at 1:00 a.m. which disturbed her sleep pattern. She now perceived that perhaps God was using this chirping bird to get her attention. She concluded that going forward, she would embrace the disturbances and commit to prayer. Other comments regarding the presentation were: (1) "It was educational and spiritual;" (2) "I appreciated the 'palms down, palms up' prayer and meditation method;" (3) "I appreciated [the] personal prayer experience, because it drew me in. Some of the presenters lacked enthusiasm in their voices;" (4) "I have learned how to listen to God;" (5) "I realize I need to be more committed;" and (6) "The entire presentation was enlightening." It was commented that the one CA who spoke from her personal experience had the most impact.

The realization that giving is ministry was an epiphanic moment for some church members. They concluded that since the Holy Spirit had equipped them with the spiritual gift of giving, they would give more. In their discussion, they determined that the church could partner with other already established organizations equipped with the infrastructure and resources available to do the work. The church members agreed they were ready to use their spiritual gifts.

On the final meeting night of the project, March 24, 2014, the CAs spent time completing the eleven questions project evaluation. Their responses are recorded in Appendix G. Afterwards the group went to a local restaurant and debriefed the presentation over a shared meal.

Analysis of Data

The CA compared the data in Tables 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 for similar ministries. Table 5.2 contains data resulting from the gift assessment questionnaires brainstorming process. The information in Table 5.3 is the Community Survey results. Table 5.4 lists outcomes of the listening prayers and journaling exercise. The comparable results (listed in Table 5.5) were: (1) Carnival (some type of annual community event); (2) Clothing Drive; (3) Shoe Drive; (4) Bilingual Job Fair; (5) Community Fellowship Meal (evangelistic outreach); Food Bank Contributions; and (7) Donation Bins (creating an opportunity for community involvement).

The concluding chapter, Chapter 6, discusses the researcher's reflections, summaries, and proposed future applications.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

The concluding chapter of this thesis is presented under the following headings:

(1) Reflections: Field Experience; (2) Summations: Criteria for Success; (3)

Recommendations: Future Application; finally, (4) Conclusion.

Reflections: Field Experience

This section contains retrospective observations of the field experience during the execution of the project. It reveals issues that ensued and potential sources, and offers remedies to mitigate them from recurring.

Modified Field Experience

The problem statement presupposes that one of the causes of few community – focused ministries is member lack of awareness of community needs. Yet, the research literature demonstrates that other possible causes could be related to understanding the mission of the Christian church, the culture of the church, and the role of clergy and members in the of the body of Christ. Many may share the worldview of those who believe the Christian church's mission is solely evangelistic and not programmatic.

Therefore, teaching the mission of the church and the role of the membership is required in addition to the teaching on the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts of grace.

At the beginning of the project, the church membership was exposed to teaching and preaching about the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts available to every member of the Body of Christ. During an eight-week period, a five-member volunteer group of clergy and laity, known as Context Associates (CAs), met every Monday evening from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. during the months of February and March. The purpose of the meetings was for them to learn about their unique individual spiritual gifts of grace and the spiritual gift combination of the congregation. A core belief of the project is the congregation of Murph Chapel – Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Valinda, California, has undergone a spiritual formation by the Holy Spirit, and its mission is to minister to the people in the community. But what are the detailed components of the mission? To answer this question knowing the congregation's spiritual gifts combination bestowed by the Holy Spirit and possessing an awareness of the community's needs was necessary. The answer to the aforementioned question surfaced when creative conversations occurred at the apex of each person knowing their spiritual gift-mix combination, understating the community's desires, and guidance by the Holy Spirit.

Powe writes, "Hospitality is about making the outsider comfortable and welcome."¹ The Community Fellowship Meal (CFM) was an opportunity for the church members of the church to demonstrate true hospitality. However, when the church members and their invited guests received their food, they moved their tables and chairs

¹ F. Douglas Powe, *New Wine New Wineskins: How African American Congregations Can Reach New Generations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2012), 75.

out of the sun into the shaded area near the church building leaving the remaining empty seats in the sun. When community guests arrived, the church members did not invite them to join them at their table located in the shade. A good majority of the membership did not make any attempt to engage the community guests in conversation although some of the Context Associates did. Even though hospitality is one of the spiritual gifts of grace of the congregation, the members did not exhibit it. To remedy this deficit in hospitality, instructions on how to be a missional church will be provided, because in a missional church the environment is a place where “learning, healing, welcoming, liberating, and thriving” takes place.²

Lessons learned that surfaced during the debriefing of the CFM were: (1) Advertise in multiple languages, English, Spanish, and Chinese, to correlate with the corresponding community demographic identified in Chapter 1; (2) Start advertising earlier; (3) Take inventory of equipment and supplies prior to the day of the event; and (4) Instruct the members on their participatory role, that is, to welcome the community guests and to interact with them, talk to them, pray with them, and, most importantly, show love towards them!

In 2012, a church member invited his neighbor to Murph Chapel-Saint Paul AME Church. When the man’s neighbor arrived at the church, he noticed that the physical church building was in desperate need of some repairs. A leaky roof caused water damage to some areas of the ceiling. He inquired about performing the repairs at a nominal labor cost. The Board of Trustees contracted his services. During the time he worked at the church, his truck broke down. He asked for permission to park his truck on

² JR Woodward, *Creating A Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 20.

the church parking lot. Unbeknownst to the Board of Trustees, the man had recently become homeless and was sleeping in his truck. When the neighbors discovered the man's living conditions, they called the police and reported a homeless man sleeping in his vehicle on the church parking lot. The Trustees invited him to sleep in the church while he completed the repairs to the church.

He was among the twenty-six persons who completed a spiritual gifts assessment. His results indicated that he was equipped with the spiritual gifts of missionary, wisdom, faith, knowledge, exhortation, and administration. He is now a member of the congregation, a member of the Board of Trustees, and he is the church's handy man. Some of the congregants contract him to do repairs on their homes. He was a tremendous help to my pastoral ministry and personal affairs.

On November 3, 2013, my mother passed away. Her house required some repairs before it could be placed on the real estate market. This man was instrumental in performing and overseeing the repairs to the house. He used his administrative skills to plan and to cost out the job; he determined what materials were needed and worked with the prescribed budget. He offered to take on my nineteen-year-old nephew as his apprentice. He trained him to patch and repair drywall, paint walls, and match texture. My nephew took his newly acquired skills and painted some interior rooms at his parent's home. He was paid for his services and was allowed to live rent-free in the house until it is sold. "A gift opens doors; it gives access to the great" (Proverbs 18:16).

Epiphanic Experiences

The Context Associates (CAs) underwent several epiphanies during the course of the project. They received several inspirational insights during the eight-week transformative journey. For some, this was their first exposure to the spiritual gifts of grace; for all, this was their first exposure to using an assessment tool as a means to identify individual spiritual gifts and the congregation's gift-mix combination. The listening prayers exercise probably had the most radical and residual effect on the group. Members of the CA reported an increase in their prayer life. Praying in public was no longer an issue, neither was praying for others. Prayer had become their first response in all situations. There was newfound boldness when it came to talking to God and listening for God's response. Their immediate responses when interacting with church members and strangers was compassion and genuine love, not anger and resentment. They demonstrated grace. They "have a new sense of joy, a fresh motivation, a new sense of direction and focus."³ This experience has awakened their telos (aim in life), and they are now equipped "to help the congregation move toward God's *telos*."⁴ God spoke and the Holy Spirit inspired them throughout this project.

Summations: Criteria of Success

The intent of this project was to educate the members of Murph Chapel-Saint Paul AME Church on the topic of spiritual gifts of grace and to inspire them to engage in creative conversations about using their God-given spiritual gifts of grace as vehicles of

³ JR Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 121.

⁴ Ibid.

transformational service to others. A segment of the congregation, the CAs, analyzed, categorized, and reflected on the assessment questionnaires and survey data. They identified the spiritual gift – mix of the congregation as giving, service, hospitality, administration, wisdom, exhortation, and faith. The first three spiritual gifts are service – based gifts, whereas the remaining four, though not directly categorized as service – based spiritual gifts, could be integrated into serving the community. These latter four and other spiritual gifts of grace will be explored for future application.

By the eighth session, the CAs designed and presented their findings to the larger body, which resulted in passionate dialogue that shifted their audience from passive observers to active participants. They were eager to do ministry! The CAs proposed to the group two new ministries from their list of Community – Focused Ministries: (1) Angel Bins Recycling & Fundraising, to be conducted in the spring; and (2) The Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, to be implemented in the fall. The spring ministry involved gathering and contributing gently used clothing, shoes, hats, purses, towels, curtains, and bed linen to the Angel Bins Company, whose mission is to “export wearable items to third world countries as a low cost alternative to new clothing and to help non-profits organizations raise money through the recycling of everyday items.”⁵ Additionally, damaged donated clothing is converted into yarn, which is then made back into clothing, and stained clothing is converted into wiping rags. The group enthusiastically consented to both projects and wanted to get started immediately. The level of their enthusiasm was so high to the point that the brainstorming process began almost instantaneously.

⁵ Angel Bins Recycling and Fundraising Company, accessed July 29, 2014, <http://angelbins.com/about/>.

Angel Bins Ministry

During the month of April, the members of the congregation were asked to gather items for donation from family members, friends, and co-workers and their own closets to contribute to the Angel Bins ministry. The items were to be delivered to the church starting Saturday, April 26, 2014, through Saturday, May 3, 2014, the day the Angel Bins truck was scheduled for pick up. The goal was to collect 100 bags of clothing and shoes—1,500 pounds.

On the day of the event, the donations yielded over 100 bags of clothing and shoes for a total weight of 1,794 pounds. In four weeks, the members collected eighty-four bags of clothing, 1,504 pounds and twenty bags of shoes, 290 pounds. There was an air of accomplishment and a sense of success felt by all the members. As a result, they agreed to adopt Angel Bins as an annual ministry. Additionally, they agreed to place a donation bin on the church property.

The Angel Bins ministry had a far reaching effect on some members of the congregation. A few members had recently lost loved ones over the past few years. The project was an opportunity for them to dispose of the personal belongings by donating them to a worthy cause. It was also an opportunity for them to clean out closets and garages, and to most of all de-clutter their surroundings, as well as their minds.

Creative Conversations

At the March 23, 2014 Church Conference, the CA's presentation resulted in stimulating creative dialogue about developing community – focused ministries at MC –

SP AME Church, and their excitement spilled over to the members of the larger congregation. Five months later, at the August 10, 2014, Church Conference, this newfound creative energy was in full force. The presidents and members of the church organizations were making creative suggestions on how to engage non – members and members to garner more involvement from their organizations.

Recommendations: Future Applications

The principles of the projects were incorporated in the Ministerial Training Board of the AME Church in the Southern California Conference (SCC), also known as, the SCC Board of Examiners (BOE). The BOE is organized into five committees or classes, (1) Committee on Instruction for the Class on Admissions, (2) Committee on Instruction for the Class on First Year Studies, (3) Committee on Instruction for the Class on Second Year Studies, (4) Committee on Instruction for the Class on Third Year Studies, and (5) Committee on Instruction for the Class on Fourth Year Studies.⁶ For the past nine years, this researcher has co-taught the Committee on Instruction for the Class on Admissions in the Southern California Conference. One of the class objectives is to assist ministerial candidates in discerning their call to ministry. The Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire is an assessment tool used in this spiritual formation process.

Additionally, this project was influential in the development of an Evangelist Certificate program. Many ministerial candidates report a vocational call to ministry in evangelism. However, formal training in the specialized ministry of evangelism was nonexistent until January 2014, when the Dean of Instructions in the Southern California

⁶ The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2012 (Kindle Locations 1990-1992). AMEC Sunday School Union. Kindle Edition.

Conference created an Evangelism Certification training model (Appendix H). This certification program (not a ministerial orders program) includes a segment on vocational discernment and the discovery of spiritual gifts.⁷

This project has far reaching implications beyond denominational boundaries. The tenets of the project are universal and can be adopted by the Church Universal. Just like the Azusa Street Mission provided a glimpse of what is possible if we allow space for the Holy Spirit to change hearts and minds, applying the spiritual gifts of grace from the Holy Spirit can mobilize Christian congregations to fulfill their God-given mission.⁸ Homelessness can be eradicated. Starving children can be fed. The wounded hearts, souls and minds can be healed. The spiritually lost can be found and offered salvation.

Clearly the mandates of Jesus and reiterated by the apostle Paul were meant for the church. Jesus promised his disciples the Holy Spirit in Acts 1:8. He told them after the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. In light of this project, Jerusalem is Murph Chapel-Saint Paul African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and its surrounding communities, Judea is the Southern California Conference (SCC) of the AME Church, Samaria is the Fifth Episcopal District of the AME Church, and the uttermost parts of the world are the worldwide Connectional AME Church and the Church Universal.

⁷ Kelvin T. Calloway, DMin, “Certification in Specialized Ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church Fifth Episcopal District Southern California Evangelism” (Los Angeles, CA: January 2014).

⁸ Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), 14.

Conclusion

This three-year journey is a testament that if you remain steadfast in the will of God, and allow your hopes and dreams to align with God's plan for your life, God will grant you the desires of your heart. But, I also discovered anything worth having or achieving often is accompanied by sacrifice. Yet, even in the midst of sacrifice, pain, and suffering God grants grace.

At the age of sixteen, my life plan was to finish high school and go to college; start a career, obtain a doctorate degree by age twenty-six, get engaged and married, and have two children in that order. However, the schema did not quite unfold as outlined. Instead, I finished high school and some college, gave birth to child number one, started a career, got married, gave birth to child number two, went through a divorce, finished college, and completed seminary. For all intents and purposes, as I stand at the threshold of completing the doctor of ministry degree, a plan made forty years ago will soon be realized. The alignment process involves a surrendered will to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to direct the use of your spiritual gifts for grace for service. It is never too late to complete God's plan for your life. The plan comes to fruition in God's time.

Through this process, the meaning of grace was elucidated. Grace was manifested as pardon and unmerited favor.⁹ Grace was sufficient. Grace is an act of love involving forgiveness that released pain and strengthened faith in God. Halfway through this process, my mother, my spiritual anchor, suddenly became gravely ill, which thrust me into the role of her guardian. For nine months, as she "walked through the valley of the

⁹ Definitions.net, "Grace," accessed September 1, 2014,
<http://www.definitions.net/definition/grace>.

shadow of death,” I prayed to God for her physical healing. This was probably one of the most difficult times of my life, second only to my own personal illness experience. Yet, I saw God’s grace in action.

God granted me time to spend with my mother during her final days on earth, and time to put her affairs in order. At the very exact moment when I announced to her that her business affairs were completed, she revealed that her mother had come to get her. I released her, read scriptures to her, and prayed with her. Seven hours later, she transitioned from this ephemeral world to the ethereal world. Of course I questioned God, “Why did mother’s death happen at this juncture in my life?” God responded, “My grace is sufficient for you.”

My mother’s death taught me lessons about grace: (1) where grace abounds, forgiveness is present and there is “room for error, sin, or failing;”¹⁰ (2) where grace abounds, there must be a “willingness to let go of our woundedness, sorrow, and anger;”¹¹ and, (3) where grace abounds, unconditional love flows, because God is love.

The motto for Murph Chapel-Saint Paul AME Church is “A place where God grants grace and race does not matter.” Grace will allow a predominately African America church located in the center of a multicultural neighborhood to minister in its context to those in need. When First AME Church of Los Angeles had food giveaways, although the line was filled with heterogeneous faces, the need was the same. In a day of church growth schemes, burgeoning megachurches, and emergent churches on the one hand, and declining church membership in many historic congregations on the other, it is

¹⁰ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 87.

¹¹ Ibid., 90.

important for us to remember how a small prayer meeting at the Azusa Street Mission mushroomed into the present-day global Pentecostal / Charismatic movements.¹² We must pray to God and meditate on God's word. It is out of this milieu that we seek to inspire others to serve whosoever will come.

Ministry is preformed when congregants remember the Christian church is sent by God to minister to the world. Ministry is preformed when all people are viewed as precious in God's sight. Ministry is preformed when others are concerned about the basic needs of others, that is, they seek ways and means to provide food, clothing, shelter, employment, financial assistance, and tutoring for the disadvantages. Ministry is performed under the unction and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When we see ourselves differently, others will see us differently. When we believe that God has equipped us with spiritual gifts of grace to help others, the result is inspired, stimulating, creative conversation about developing community-focused ministries and eventually implementation of these ministries.

¹² Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006), 6.

APPENDIX A

CONTEXT ASSOCIATES CERTIFICATE

Doctoral Studies

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CONTEXT ASSOCIATE CERTIFICATION**D.Min. Candidate:** Rev. Mary S. Minor

Description of proposed program: This project proposes that when clergy and laity have a cognitive understanding of their spiritual gifts and an affective awareness of the community's needs, they will begin to have creative conversations that will generate visions for new community- focused ministries.

Context Associate: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Home Telephone: () _____ Cell Phone: () _____

How do you propose to work with the other Context Associates?

I agree to participate in the entire 8-week program, February 3, 2014 through March 24, 2014. If for some unforeseen reason I cannot attend, I will contact the DMin Candidate in advance, that is, prior to the convening of the meeting.

Endorsements:DMin Candidate _____
(Signature)Context Associate _____
(Signature)

Date _____

APPENDIX B

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP MEAL DOOR HANGER

**A Special Invitation
From Your Neighbor**

Come join us in our celebration of African American Heritage month and enjoy a community fellowship meal together.

**Sunday
Feb. 23, 2014
FREE LUNCH**

Food is first come, first served.
We would like to find out what we could do as a church for our community. Please help us by completing a brief survey after lunch.
Thank you very much.



Murph Chapel-Saint Paul AME Church
1381 Pass and Covina Road
Valinda, CA 91744
(626) 917-3686

Pastor Mary S. Minor

APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP MEAL BANNER



APPENDIX D
COMMUNITY FELLOWSHIP MEAL TICKET

Name _____
Address _____

City _____
Phone _____

1 - MEAL TICKET

MURPH CHAPEL-SAINT PAUL
AME CHURCH

**COMMUNITY
FELLOWSHIP MEAL**

1381 Pass & Covina Road
Valinda, CA 91744
(626) 917-3686
February 23, 2014

Rev. Mary S. Minor, Pastor

Thank you for your participation!

APPENDIX E
COMMUNITY SURVEY

**Murph Chapel – Saint Paul AME Church
COMMUNITY SURVEY**

Please take a moment to complete this brief survey. We want to know how we can better serve you.

1. What community services do you need? (check all that apply)

- Job referral
- Resume Writing Assistance
- Language Interpretation (Spanish/Chinese)
- Financial Assistance
- Food
- Clothing
- Child Care
- Adult Day Care
- Health Insurance
- Tutoring for school aged youth & young adults
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

2. What community activities would you like the church to sponsor?

3. Are you a member of a church congregation?

- Yes; how often do you attend worship?
____ 1X/month ____ 2Xs/month ____ all the time
- Are you interested in finding a place of worship?

Please enter your contact information.

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

4. Would you like to be a community volunteer?

- Yes; please enter your contact information

Name: _____

Telephone Number: _____

5. Demographic Information

- How far do you live from this Church? _____
- What is your gender? ____ M ____ F
- What is your age group? ____ under 21 ____ 21-29
____ 30 - 39 ____ 40 - 55 ____ 56 - 65 ____ 65 +
- What is your ethnicity?
____ Hispanic ____ Asian ____ Black ____ White
____ Multi-Ethnic ____ Native American ____ Pacific Islander ____ Other (please specify) _____

APPENDIX F

CONTEXT ASSOCIATES TEAM PRESENTATION

EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE FOR SERVICE AT MURPH CHAPEL-
SAINT PAUL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL
CHURCH: A GIFTS BASED MODEL

**Doctor of Ministry Project
Rev. Mary S. Minor, DMin Candidate
United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH**

Murph Chapel-Saint Paul (MC-SP) AME Church Conference
Context Associates Team Presentation
Sunday, March 23, 2014

Presented by

Millicent Collins
Beulah Giddings
Christine Giddings
Danni Tang
Rev. Joan Taylor
Rev. Mary S. Minor

SLIDE 1

Agenda

- Project Overview
- MC-SP Church Spiritual Gifts (SG) Mix
- MC-SP Church Spiritual Gifts (SG) Mix Potential Ministries Brainstorming
- Community Fellowship Meal (CFM) Survey Results
- Context Associates (CA) Listening Prayer (LP)
- Community Needs Brainstorming
- Vision of Potential Community-Focused Ministries
- MC-SP Church Group Dialogue

SLIDE 2

Project Overview

- Hypothesis
- Research Design
- Timeline
- Context Associates (CA) Team Meetings
February 3, 2014 – March 24, 2014
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

SLIDE 3**MC-SP Church Spiritual Gifts (SG) Mix**

Total Assessments Received = 26

- Giving = 15 (57%)
- Service = 15 (57%)
- Hospitality = 13 (50%)
- Administration = 13 (50%)
- Wisdom = 10 (38%)
- Exhortation = 10 (38%)
- Faith = 10 (38%)

SLIDE 4**MC-SP Church Spiritual Gifts (SG) Mix □ Potential Ministries Brainstorming**

- Food Bank: Soup Kitchen
- Thrift Shop: Free Clothing Giveaway
- Job Referrals: Job Preparation, Resume Writing
- Counseling Services: Referrals
- College Preparation: Information
- Housing Referrals
- Rites of Passage Programs for Boys and Girls
- Stewardship Training Program: Time, Talent, Resources
- Economic Development
- Health Fair: Covered CA Referral, Blood Pressure Screenings

SLIDE 5**Community Fellowship (CF) □ Survey Results □**

Question #1: What community services do you need?

Total Surveys Received = 64

- Job Referrals = 19 (30%)
- Tutoring/GED = 12 (19%)
- Food = 11 (17%)
- Clothing = 10 (16%)
- Resume Writing = 7 (11%)
- Financial Assistance = 7 (11%)
- Health Insurance = 7 (11%)
- Language Interpretation = 5 (8%)

SLIDE 6**Community Fellowship (CF) □ Survey Results □**

Question #2: What community activities would you like the church to sponsor?

Total Surveys Received = 64

- Youth Activities = 11 (17%)
- Sports = 9 (14%)
- Tutoring = 4 (6%)
- Food Programs = 3 (5%)
- Music = 3 (5%)
- Programs for the Homeless = 3 (5%)
-

SLIDE 7**Context Associates (CA) □ Listening Prayer (LP) Experience**Obstacles

- Distractions
- Unusual Occurrences/ Interruptions
- Fatigue
- Lack of Focus

Overcoming Obstacles

- Owned and released
- Experience Foresight
- Adjusted Prayer Time
- Prayed for Focus

SLIDE 8**Context Associates (CA) □ Listening Prayer (LP) Brainstorming**

Prayer Time Goal: Listen for *God's Voice*

- “Something told me”
- Audible Voice
- Feeling
- Vision
- Dreams
- Scripture
- Intuition
- Sound
- Nature
- Discerning God’s Will

SLIDE 9**Context Associates (CA) □ Listening Prayer (LP) Results**

Prayer Time Results

- Fast – Pray for Others
- Faith – Phil. 4:13
- Discipline – Disciple of Christ
- Holy Boldness – Lack of Fear; Psalm 32
- Praying for Neighbor – Love; Compassion; Matt 22
- Study – 2 Tim 2:15

SLIDE 10**Community Needs Brainstorming□(post-Listening Prayer (LP) Experience)**

- Pray over the Community – Joshua and Jericho
- Learn the Language and Culture
- Compassion – Careful Attentive Listening
- Offer Spiritual Food – Love, Hope, Faith, & Prayer
- Continuous Activities

SLIDE 11**Vision of Potential Community-Focused Events**

CA Brainstorming

- Carnival (Annually)
- Clothing Drive (Bi-Annually)
- Shoe Drive (Bi-Annually)
- Bilingual Job Fair (Bi-Annually)
- Fellowship Meal (Quarterly)
- Food Bank (Quarterly)
- Donation Bins (Continuously)

SLIDE 12**Vision of Potential Community-Focused Ministries**

Community-Focused Events *vs* Community-Focused Ministries
Ministries involve God-talk and spiritual tasks

- Prayer
- Scripture
- Gospel Tracts
- Gospel Music
- Bible Trivia Games and Booths

SLIDE 13**MC-SP Church Group Dialogue**

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Ephesians 4:11-12

APPENDIX G
CONTEXT ASSOCIATES EVALUATION RESULTS

Appendix G: Context Associates Evaluation Results

Evaluation Question CA Member	1. How many weeks did you attend?	2. What are your thoughts regarding the length of the project?	3. What did you like most about the process?	4. What did you like least about the project?
#1	8	Too short; just getting into it	That each week we gathered together and the information was explained thoroughly. This made the process for me much more understandable and enjoyable.	That it was too short
#2	7	Just right	I enjoyed the insights that everyone of the team presented. I also enjoyed seeing how the church's spiritual gifts matched the needs of the community.	
#3	7	Just right	The process was challenging; group participating in the process.	The process was not long enough
#4	8	Adequate; not too long	We had an outline before we started. So we knew exactly what to do each week and we were able to follow through.	The first attempt at listening to God's voice was unsuccessful. However, as we moved on I got my questions answered.
#5	8	8 weeks went by quickly	Enjoyed being a part of a team, researching, and reaching a conclusion on the project.	The (CA weekly session) time frame was a bit too long.

Evaluation Question	5. Is there anything you would do differently?	6. Explain your contribution(s) to the project. Was it what you expected to do?	7. One of the project objectives was to incite creative conversations at MC-SP AME Church that will generate visions of new community-focused ministries. In your opinion, what occurred or did not occur to confirm the objective was met?	8. How did participating in this project personally impact you?
	CA Member			
#1	No; not [at] all	My contribution was to help in trying to figure out what ministry or ministries we are to provide for our community. It was much more than I expected to do because in order to be effective, our ministry has to be God-centered and we did that through meditation and listening prayer.	The outpour of the responses from the congregation was incredible. People were touched and I believe that our goal and objective was met just by the reaction to what we had done. They were excited about ministry opportunities that were introduced and started planning for it on the spot. They were enlightened on the art of meditation, as well.	It showed me how to be still again and to re-learn what compassion means towards everyone.
#2	Maybe participate with the Community Meal more.	I contributed by giving input on organizing the Community Meal, the brainstorming regarding the ministries that the church can possibly do, and participated in the presentation.	I believe the objective was met. Community-focused ministries were generated in our meetings.	It helped me focus on what God has planned for our church by the way of servicing others outside of the congregation as well as inside.
#3	Yes, more lay church members	My contribution was analyzing and discussing the test results of the Wagner's Finding Your Spiritual Gifts.	The project objectives incited conversations at MC-SP AME Church and the objective was met.	Personally, the project enhanced my understanding of the power of listening prayer. I had an experience through prayer that had never happened before. I heard God call "my name."
#4	The Community Fellowship Meal generated less people than we expected. So, I should have	I helped in contributing ideas and actively participated in our discussion. I was expecting to do	Upon completing the 8 weeks, I think our objective was met because not only [did] we accomplish everything o the	It was a blessing for me. I feel it has strengthened my prayer life and I'm so glad that I signed up for it. Also, it has

	designed the door hanger in both English and Spanish.	what I was told to do, but had no idea how the meeting would be conducted beforehand.	outline we set out to do, but our presentation was well received by the congregation.	taught me how to pray and meditate and listen to God.
#5	Perhaps change the [meeting] time from evening to an afternoon session.	My contribution to the project was being instrumental in getting a banner designed for the Community Fellowship Meal; No, I had no idea that this would occur.	The objective was met. We had an outline of the project and we followed through to the end. We worked together to meet the objective.	The portion of the project that personally impacted me was the individual prayer time. I learned how to go deeper into prayer by adding the element of listening for God's response.

Evaluation Question CA Member	9. What insights did you learn by going through this process?	10. How would you rate the DMin Candidate's performance? On a scale of 1 to 5, please circle your selection. 1 = unsatisfactory 2 = Needs Improvement 3 = Good 4= Excellent 5 = exemplary If your score is 3 or below, please help the DMin Candidate by entering suggestions on how to improve her performance.	11. Please enter any other comments:	12. Name (optional) <i>Some CA submitted their names. However, the DMin Candidate opted not to include their names.</i>
#1	To really appreciate meditation and listening to the voice of God. I don't have to tune sounds and noise out anymore because it could be God speaking to me through sound, nature, etc.	5	Job well done; hate for it to come to an end	
#2	On how it is important to match the gifts of the church to the ministries that can reach the community	5	I would like to thank the DMin Candidate for allowing me to be a part of this process.	
#3	I gained insight: • Sharing ideas with other CA; • Learned to be more patient; • Respecting CA differences; • Learned how God can speak through nature, feelings, etc.	4		
#4	Through this process, I learned that continuous effort is needed in our prayer life and listening to God will give us directions, peace, and joy.	5	Can we call it something else? DMin sounds...you know. Am I the only one that thinks this way? Maybe spell it out? It looks OK on paper, just when we say it...	
#5	[I] learned that MC-SP gift mix highest score is giving; that I can actually commit to a project; God speaks in many different ways	4	[I] hope that the ministries revealed through the project will be implemented for MC-SP.	

APPENDIX H

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SCC BOE EVANGELISM CERTIFICATION

Certification in Specialized Ministry in the African Methodist**Episcopal Church Fifth Episcopal District****Southern California Conference****EVANGELISM**

The Evangelist Certificate is a certification in the specialized ministry of evangelism. It is a certification (not an "order") for individuals for the ministry of evangelism in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Candidates seeking Evangelist Certification must be of good moral character and a member of the local church cooperating with the local pastor for the good of the work. Evangelists are amenable to the Quarterly, District, and Annual Conferences and are subject to the authority of the local pastor.

Educational Requirements

Individuals seeking certification in evangelism in the Southern California Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church must have a High School diploma and a local preacher's license from their Quarterly Conference. The candidates must meet the standards set by the Conference Board of Examiners. These standards include completion of the prescribed curriculum relating to Evangelism. The curriculum includes; The Call and Introduction to Christian Ministry, Clergy Sexual Misconduct, Vocational Discernment and the Discovery of Spiritual Gifts, The Doctrine and Discipline of the A.M.E. Church, Survey of the Bible, Pastoral Care and Visitation, The Gift of Evangelism and How Churches Grow, and Developing an Evangelism Ministry for the Local Church.

Core Competencies for Certification in Evangelism

1. Ability to work with the local pastor in the development and administration of an evangelism ministry in the local church that equips congregants to tell the Christian story to the unchurched and the unsaved and to invite them to become disciples of Jesus Christ and members of the local church.
2. Development of a ministry of hospitality in the congregation that leads to greater involvement of congregants in the life and ministry of the local church.
3. Ability to develop ways to care for congregants through pastoral care, visitation, support, and small group ministry.
4. Provide opportunities for the growth and empowerment of the congregation in their faith and discipleship.

Required Readings

Holy Bible

AMEC Book of Discipline (Current Edition)

AMEC Hymnal

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